

THE SPECTACLE OF WAR  
IN THE MODERN AMERICAN WAR NOVEL

By

HARVEY L. MOLLOY

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Harvey L. Molloy

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This dissertation addresses the question of how war novels remember war. I argue that since the Spanish-American war, mass media have presented war as a spectacle to civilian populations. The war novel emerges as a literary genre that frequently challenges the conventions of propaganda and the popular memory of a war.

In Chapter 1, I define the spectacle of war and with reference to Hayden White's Tropics of Discourse, point to the similarities between the activity of the novelist and the historian's task of emploting the past according to a set of existing literary genres.

In Chapter 2, I cover the presentation of the spectacle of war in the yellow journalism of the Spanish-American war. With the rise of the yellow press of Hearst and Pulitzer, events are characterized by their newsworthiness, and the

press becomes capable of generating support for a war. I then show how early reviewers of Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage admired the emphasis on the protagonist's individual reaction to battle rather than the sentiments and generalities of veterans' stories. In World War I, I argue that the anti-war novels of Hemingway and Dos Passos challenge the conventions of propaganda and travel fiction by presenting an "anti-spectacular" view of the war.

In Chapter 3, with reference to Baudrillard's concept of the hyperreal and Paul Virilio's War and Cinema, I discuss how the war novels of Heller, Vonnegut and Pynchon view World War II as a staged conflict between nation states. I suggest that Pynchon's notion of the 'paracinematic' might serve as a theoretical concept that allows us to understand the complex relationship between war and cinema.

The dissertation closes with a discussion of the relationship between Vietnam fiction, cultural memory, and the presentation of images of the Vietnam War on American television. With reference to Gregory Ulmer's Teletheory, I argue that many Vietnam narratives remember the war as a mystory.

CHAPTER 1  
WAR NOVELS, NARRATIVE, AND THE SPECTACLE OF WAR

In the Fall 1990 semester at the University of Florida, I set my students an assignment in which I asked them to write an account of their earliest memories of war. I wanted to find out how they first heard about war and how their understanding of war had changed over time. From their papers it was apparent that their knowledge of war came from mass media (movies, TV shows, '60s music) and personal war narratives told by either a family member or a friend. In many cases, students arrived at an understanding of war by contrasting oral narratives with media representations of war. In Spring 1991 I gave this assignment again to a class of freshmen students. There was a marked difference in the responses of the second class, a difference no doubt brought about by the beginning of the Gulf War. The Spring semester papers reflected a new set of concerns regarding the draft and the possible deaths of American forces stationed in the Persian Gulf. Many felt that the United States had no other choice but to fight for "the liberation of Kuwait." Others, however, voiced concern over whether the war that had landed on their doorstep was going to correspond to the wars they had seen on television.

For these students the pressing question was "What is this war going to be like?"

While students had no direct experience of combat, or prior to January 15, 1991, of wartime, their experiences constitute valuable historical material. I am now able to appreciate what it means to view Star Wars (1977) as a quintessential war film, while also vaguely remembering the retreat from Saigon as "the day America lost." In many of the students' early drafts, childhood games, feature and documentary films, M\*A\*S\*H, and U2 songs, along with the occasional family story, were mixed together in a melange of associations and memories. After completing the paper, many students told me that in writing the assignment they had begun to "sort out" war and the role war played in their childhood. The act of writing involved recalling, sorting, and organizing the raw stuff of memory into a coherent narrative. In doing so, memory was translated into a narrative form which effectively began to make sense of each writer's individual past.

This chapter is concerned with elaborating a number of key concepts; the spectacle, emplotment, and master and micro-narratives of war. In particular, I want to explore the relationship between images of war and the cultural remembrance of war. For we cannot understand the spectacle of war within the American war novel without first considering how certain novels both emplot past events while questioning popular memories of war.

Making Sense of War: War Narratives, Emplotment  
and Cultural Memory

To the extent that each student paper attempts to transform the past into a narrative so as to arrive at an understanding of war, each paper is engaged with making sense of an individual past. Although my students have never experienced war, their papers show how representations of war have become part of everyday life. Critics of war literature tend to view war narratives and war literature as a process of sense-making, by which the experience of war enters into cultural memory. In The Great War and Modern Memory, Paul Fussell argues that the experience of the war involves the transformation of a whole corpus of cultural myths and literary tropes. In Fussell's view, if we are to understand war literature we must first consider the cultural framework available to make sense of the experience of war and then the ways the war itself becomes part of the inherited mythic structure of everyday life. This argument is repeated in Philip Beidler's American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam. For Beidler, Vietnam war fiction is primarily concerned with the task of cultural sense-making. If Vietnam is to have any meaning or significance within American culture, then the experience of Vietnam needs to be brought home and incorporated into the nation's collective memory. The best writing about Vietnam involves a commitment to "an unstinting concreteness" while also engaging in an exploration of "the peculiar ways in which

the experience of the war can now be made to signify within the larger evolution of the culture as a whole" (xiii).

The writer of war fiction confronts, from the very beginning of his or her endeavor, the question of genre. For an author attempting to critically reflect on the nature and experience of war, the genre of the war novel may itself embody certain values and expectations repugnant to the author. The author's struggle against the structural limitations presented by the conventional war novel is the subject of the opening chapter of Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five. The narrator tells of the difficulties he encountered trying to plot the story of how he survived the firebombing of Dresden: "As a trafficker in climaxes and thrills and characterization and wonderful dialogue and suspense and confrontations, I had outlined the Dresden story many times" (Sl-5 5). Yet the tricks of the novelist seem somehow inadequate to the task at hand. Added to this frustration, Mary O'Hare, the wife of his old war buddy Bernard, is antagonistic towards the telling of war stories:

"You'll pretend you were men instead of babies, and you'll be played in the movies by Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving, dirty old men. And war will look just wonderful, so we'll have a lot more of them." (Sl-5 14)

Mary acts as a critical reader who feels that war stories are dangerous myths in which men pretend to be real men instead of naive children. For Mary, all war stories are masculine fictions that disremember the past. In response

to Mary's objections, the narrator promises not to glorify war; and the science-fiction elements within the novel, along with the complete lack of heroism on the part of the soldiers, testify that he has kept his word. Billy's time tripping subverts any sense we might have that soldiers are the source of meaningful action who in turn invest war with heroic values. The Tralfamadorian view of time allows Vonnegut to break away from chronological time, with its inevitable peaks and climaxes as causes become effects, so as to present a story with no beginning, middle, or end. "There are almost no characters in this story, and almost no dramatic confrontations, because most of the people in it are so sick and so much the listless playthings of enormous forces" (Sl-5 164).

Yet the challenging of the conventions of war fiction by Vonnegut, Pynchon, and others constitutes more than just a critique of the ideological values inherent in common cultural representations of war. To put it simply, the question "What are the implications of my telling a war story?" involves an examination of the role that genre plays in our understanding of the past through the production of narratives. Only by telling a story can the past become organized in such a way as to have meaning and coherence for both narrator and listener/reader. In organizing his story with colored crayons, the narrator of Slaughterhouse-Five wrestles with the problem of how to emplote his account of the bombing of Dresden, and this struggle with form and

genre mirrors the historian's task of arranging the past. In Tropics of Discourse, Hayden White argues that the historian, like the novelist, must consider the ways in which an interpretation of the past is always, in part, a result of the genre selected by the historian to emplot his historical narrative:

The historian shares with his audience general notions of the forms that significant human situations must take by virtue of his participation in the specific processes of sense-making. . . . In the process of studying a given complex of events, he begins to perceive the possible story form that such events may figure. In his narrative account of how this set of events took on the shape which he perceives to inhere within it, he emplots his account as a story of a particular kind. (White 86)

The emplotment of the story discloses the narrative mode which makes sense of the potentially infinite series of past events. The historian brings to records of past events a sense of the forms and genres that effectively organize the past into a meaningful narrative. According to White, reading a history is similar to reading a novel as "[t]he reader, in the process of following the historian's account of those events, gradually comes to realize that the story he is reading is of one kind rather than another: romance, tragedy, comedy, satire, epic, or what have you" (86).

As Michael Herr came to learn as a war correspondent in Vietnam, genre embodies a mode of understanding the events narrated. Reflecting on a story told to him by a "4th Division Lump" he comments that it was "as one-pointed and resonant as any war story I ever heard, it took me a year to



understand it" (4). The story, like many narrative fragments of the Vietnam war, presents something of a mystery:

"Patrol went up the mountain. One man came back. He died before he could tell us what happened."

I waited for the rest, but it seemed not to be that kind of story; when I asked him what had happened he just looked like he felt sorry for me, fucked if he'd waste time telling stories to anyone dumb as I was. (Herr 4-5).

This story resonates with significance for both Herr and the reader because it suggests the complex set of relationships that exist between both teller and listener, historian and genre. For the soldier involved, telling "what happened" doesn't involve making a story or interpretation of the events being narrated. Such a story would only serve to add meaning to a tale that the narrator is unwilling to sort into a genre familiar to the listener. Yet, as the grunt's reaction to Herr's question demonstrates, the story does belong to a particular genre. The teller knows how long Herr has been in Vietnam from his literary incompetence; only a new guy would be dumb enough not to know how to listen to his story. In this way, the exchange of narratives serves to separate participant members of the war's sub-culture from outsiders. During the course of Dispatches, Herr moves from his position as an outside journalist reporting the war to being a member of this sub-culture possessing the literary competence that allows him to make sense of the stories and customs of the soldiers around him: "I went to cover a war and the war covered me;

an old story, unless of course you've never heard it" (20). In Dispatches we learn that soldiers, not just historians, interpret the past by, in Hayden White's words, "the choice of a plot structure, which gives to their narratives a recognizable form, and by the choice of a paradigm of explanation, which gives to their arguments a specific shape, thrust, and mode of articulation" (White 67).

Norman Mailer's The Armies of the Night explicitly investigates the similarities between the writing of fiction and of history. The first part of the novel declares itself "History as a Novel" and, after beginning with the presentation of Time magazine's account of Mailer's antics at a protest meeting against the Vietnam war at Washington's Ambassador Theatre, essentially employs novelistic devices "in order to find out what happened" (14). Towards the close of Book II, in a chapter titled "A Palette of Tactics," Mailer performs a now famous reversal by informing the reader, "It is obvious the first book is a history in the guise or dress or manifest of a novel, and the second is a real or true novel--no less!--presented in the style of a history" (284). The motive for insisting that the second book, while remaining "obedient to a general style of historical writing" to the extent of "pretending to be a history," is actually a novel lies in Mailer's stated conviction "that an explanation of the mystery of the events at the Pentagon cannot be developed by the methods of history--only by the instincts of the novelist" (284).

However, in spite of Mailer's dichotomy between the methods of history and the hunches of the novelist, The Armies of the Night demonstrates the novelistic flavor of history. Both the historian and the novelist create narratives from either fictional or non-fictional events and in doing so both plot their narratives according to the shared conventions of literary genres.

If in the emplotment of narrative the novelist performs a task similar to that of the historian, we should note a fundamental difference between the two. The novel, as a narrative form, does not need to justify either its methods of emplotment nor the validity of its depiction of war. By comparison, historians are required to employ a "valid" method, not to fabricate facts, and to remain in some fashion faithful to the past they transform into narrative. For while the historian produces a narrative according to the genre selected, even if a self-reflexive or metahistorical attitude towards his or her method is maintained, the historian is not at liberty to produce a history composed of false historical facts. A history composed of purely invented events and false dates (such as "the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1936"), written in the conventional style of any history, would be a fiction which could be read as a parody of historical discourse.

Yet the absence of any method, or any commitment towards reporting the truth, obviously does not entail the rejection of the war novel as a literary form which yields

no valuable knowledge of the past. Jean-François Lyotard's definition of narrative knowledge adequately describes the condition of knowledge inscribed in war fiction:

I have said that narrative knowledge does not give priority to the question of its own legitimation and that it certifies itself in the pragmatics of its own transmission without having recourse to argumentation and proof. (Lyotard 27)

Moreover, the experience of those soldiers who fought, expressed in the narratives they produce, may directly contradict narratives which serve to legitimize war. In an appendix to James Gibson's The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam, a detailed study of how the Pentagon managed the Vietnam war as a corporate production system--in which officers were managers while enlisted men worked to produce enemy deaths--Gibson concludes: "The warrior's knowledge as expressed in memoirs, novels, poems and plays by the soldiers, together with reports by oral historians and essay journalists, posits a literature about the war which contradicts the war-managers at virtually every level" (461). Gibson wonders why the over 200 books written by Vietnam warriors have had such little impact on the writers of the official histories of the war who, on the whole, accept and employ the rhetoric of the war's managerial class. Gibson finally poses the question "What are the tacit rules governing 'legitimate' knowledge about the war, and how have they marginalized and discredited the warrior's knowledge?" (461).

While Gibson turns to Michel Foucault's conception of "subjugated knowledges" for a solution, Lyotard's distinction between a master narrative as a narrative of legitimation and minor narrative (petit recit) as "the quintessential form of imaginative invention" provides a theoretical tool for exploring other possible answers (Lyotard 60).<sup>1</sup> More importantly, a consideration of the spectacle of war must take into account the discursive-historical contexts--that is to say the social formations of power at the moments of a text's production and reception--which determine the relationship between the spectacle as representation and master narratives of war. Lyotard's concern in The Postmodern Condition is primarily with the contemporary condition of knowledge given the breakdown of master narratives in the sciences. If we apply Lyotard's distinction between types of narrative to the study of war, then we can say that a master narrative is any discourse that legitimates the practice of war. For just as science requires a discourse to provide a grounding for the validity of its own methods, war also requires a master narrative to ground the violence of its mayhem. As such, the master narrative serves the interests of the war's managerial class who must justify an unleashing of violence which in peacetime conditions would be subject to social penalties. For our purposes, the master narrative functions as a vehicle for the transmission of wartime ideology.<sup>2</sup> Yet the master narrative is never purely singular. In the final

analysis, there is no one solitary master narrative, only a set of master narratives as each articulation of a master narrative draws from a potential set of narratives which seek to legitimize war. America's war against Germany in the Great War was simultaneously presented as a fight against the Kaiser as the devil incarnate, an attempt to rescue Mother Europe, and the struggle "to make the world fit for democracy." Minor narratives, on the other hand, make no such claims. Often written or spoken in colloquial or informal language, minor war narratives simply offer their knowledge in the form of a grunt's tale: "The warrior's knowledge is not homogeneous; its insights and concepts and 'supporting data' are not laid out in readily understood sequence, but are instead embedded in thousands of stories" (Gibson 466).

The war novel's capacity to question or affirm these master narratives renders it one of the paramount forms of political fiction. The task of the critic of war fiction is to attempt to determine how each novel situates itself in regard to master narratives and to remember that the novel's capacity for irony is such that an inscription of the master narrative may also disclose significant anxieties or aporias within the rhetoric of legitimation. Just as the master narrative is not singular neither is it ever purely inscribed--every articulation of the master narrative is also a transformation and mutation of its language and method. In this way, the master narrative shares certain

key features with Hayden White's idea of genres, as every narrative is a transformation of a genre and the pure narrative or genre exists only as an idealized type.

What is the status of master narratives which legitimize war in America today? This question cannot be addressed without considering the presentation of war as spectacle to civilian populations. For if we accept, along with his distinction between micro-narratives and master narratives, Lyotard's definition of the postmodern as an "incredulity towards metanarratives" then the ability of master narratives to legitimize war should be weakening as we approach the next century (Lyotard xxiv). When compared to the jingoistic fervor of the Great War and the general consensus that World War II was a just war, the protests by civilian populations against the Vietnam and Gulf Wars suggest a certain crisis in convincing large sections of the public that these wars are legitimate battles against a common enemy. A crisis of legitimation does exist, but in terms of the waging of modern war it is difficult to determine whether this crisis makes a significant difference.

This paradox raises the question of how master narratives are transmitted throughout a culture. Narratives which sanction war emplot war as a struggle between competing values--good against evil, democracy against tyranny, etc. Western culture can perhaps be characterized by the tendency towards emploting war as an allegorical

struggle between absolute values. Seen in this light, the paradigm for Western war is the first crusade called for by Pope Urban II, at the council at Clermont which sat from 18 November to 28 November 1095, in which the act of participating in a holy war against the infidels in Jerusalem offered spiritual rewards. In modern consumer societies, narratives of legitimation persuade not only by argumentation and eloquent rhetoric but also through the presentation of images and visual icons. In television footage of the first three weeks of the Gulf War, military censors constantly released footage of planes landing and taking off from aircraft carrier decks. Here the micro-narrative of the landing of a single jet testifies to the glamorous spectacle of military technology, a spectacle which in itself, as the demonstration of superior air power, functions as an argument for the use of military force in the region. It is as if merely the photographic image of Einstein, endlessly reproduced and disseminated throughout society at large, served as a testament to the validity of relativity.

### Defining the Spectacle of War

How are we to define the spectacle of war? Webster's New World Dictionary notes two senses of the spectacle: (1) "something to look at, especially some strange or remarkable sight" and (2) "a public show or exhibition on a grand scale." Following Webster's, we need to distinguish



between representations of war that depict war as an eye-catching spectacle and the apprehension, on the part of a protagonist, of the scene of war as remarkable sight or unusual display.

### The Spectacle of War as Representation

The spectacle, as representation, can always be read in terms of its position with regard to master narratives serving to legitimize war. We are always able to discern power at work in the construction of war as spectacle, as power is nothing else than the network of discursive formations which permit the exchange of signs. In Foucault's words,

One needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.  
(History of Sexuality 93)

While the master narrative serves the interests of a particular social class or group, the power which legitimizes war never absolutely belongs to any one state or party. The spectacle is here a representation of war produced and distributed within a set of discursive formations. Even an ambiguous or undecidable work which refuses to either legitimize or condemn war is produced within the context of numerous discourses. Foucault's definition of power reminds us that no work can determine its own historical context. The "spectacle of war" is

not meant to be understood as applying only to those representations that seek to present war as desirable or as the natural expression of national will. Master narratives appropriate the spectacular in a manner that is never total, as the spectacle can also be appropriated by narratives that challenge the legitimacy of war. Moreover, as we shall see in both Cummings's The Enormous Room as well as Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" and A Farewell To Arms, the presentation of war as anti-spectacular disrupts master narratives by formulating an entirely new political aesthetics of the gaze.

Within advanced capitalist societies the spectacle appears as a commodity that the consumer desires to possess. The value of Guy Debord's The Society of the Spectacle lies in his realization that the fragmentation of modern society into diverse groups, and the concomitant loss of a direct sense of a unitary culture--both now generally acknowledged as predominant features of postmodern society--occurs as the desire for community and common values becomes the desire to consume the spectacle of community as commodity: "The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as a part of society, and as instrument of unification" (Society 3). This is never more true than in the presentation of the spectacle of the Gulf War on television where, aside from planes copying the maneuvers previously seen by the public in the film Top Gun (1986), the sight of anti-war protesters demonstrating outside the White House is

offered as proof of the tolerance granted to dissenters in the United States and thus is coopted to the allegory. Foucault's formulation of power as a "complex strategic situation" allows us to escape the paranoid pessimism of Debord's comment, made twenty years after The Society of the Spectacle, that "[s]pectacular government, which now possesses all the means necessary to falsify the whole of production and perception, is the absolute master of memories just as it is the unfettered master of plans which will shape the most distant future" (Comments 10). While the spectacle, as representation, announces a will-to-represent, it knows no absolute master.

### War as a Spectacular Display

Here war appears to an observer as a spectacular or theatrical display; the marching of a uniformed army, the glowing fireworks of anti-aircraft fire, the landing of helicopters, all can be viewed as breathtaking sights which catch the viewer's eye. Yet the spectacle can also be shocking; a corpse covered with ants, a necklace of ears, the burnt skin of a dying child. In Dispatches, Michael Herr describes a helicopter flight over Vietnam:

Flying over jungle was almost pure pleasure, doing it on foot was nearly all pain. . . . Once in some thick jungle corner with some grunts standing around, a correspondent said, "Gee, you must really see some beautiful sunsets in here," and they almost pissed themselves laughing. But you could fly up and into hot tropic sunsets that would change the way you thought about light forever. You could also fly out of places that

were so grim they turned to black and white in your head five minutes after you'd gone. (Herr 9)

Herr's Dispatches, like many war novels and memoirs, is reminiscent of travel fiction. The country to be explored--which no longer corresponds to the borders and names found on French maps--is the shifting zone of war. The narrator, as tourist, recounts the pleasurable and painful sights of his journey. In the above passage, the mobility provided by helicopter transport allows Herr to view the war as a series of contrasting sights he notes before flying to his next destination.

The war novel frequently depicts the war as spectacle which is reported to the reader, and it is this reporting of foreign sights and sounds which constitutes its similarity to travel fiction. The American public is fascinated by depictions of war, which now permeate all levels of popular entertainment. The desire for news is more than a curiosity as to what is happening both at home and abroad. Rather, what is desired from news media, popular fiction, and films such as Oliver Stone's Platoon (1986) is a re-creation of the experience of war. In this way, the news reporter on the scene becomes the eyes and ears of the viewer/reader as spectator. From travel fiction the reader hopes to obtain a taste of the experience of travelling overseas, just as war fiction provides a sense of the experience of war.

The spectacular nature of war owes a great deal to the simple fact that, in the words of an anonymous American

newspaper editor, "wars sell newspapers."<sup>3</sup> The very newsworthiness of armed conflict is an essential feature of modern war. Of course, reporters see war as good copy. They can choose to report what the military tells them or they can venture out into the field in search of a hard story. They can write in the language of the master narrative or report the micro-narratives of the people fighting the war--if such stories remain uncensored. Yet the set of relations between reporter and reader in part determines whether the war remains a spectacle, a sensational series of events that are reported to readers back home. Everything that happens--good or bad, pleasurable or full of pain--is assessed according to its value as a potential narrative. Paradoxically, censorship and the general sanitization of war also result in a feeling amongst soldiers that, in Walt Whitman's words, "the real war will never get in the books."<sup>4</sup> Here lies the strange logic of the spectacle; on the one hand the public desires to know everything about war, on the other hand censorship, and the public themselves, generally familiarize and cleanse distasteful aspects of war. Commenting on the contempt and verbal subversion expressed by American troops in World War II, Paul Fussell notes that they "knew that in its [the war's] representation to the laity what was happening to them was systematically sanitized and Norman Rockwellized, not to mention Disneyfied" (Wartime 268).

From Crane onwards, there is a clear link between the writing of war fiction and the journalism profession: Hemingway, Dos Passos and Cummings--as well as Pynchon's Tyrone Slothrop--are all in some sense war reporters. Each writer must address the question of how the war is to be reported. The literary quality of a war novel can in part be gauged by the degree to which the freedom offered by the novel as a literary form is utilized to examine the presentation of war in other media. This freedom comes from the condition of narrative knowledge which claims no objectivity or method of verification for the truths and events it presents the reader. Moreover, the polyphonic character of the novel--that is, its ability to articulate numerous voices, rhetorics and jargons within a single rubric--permits a critique of the languages and styles employed by media to represent war.

### The Spectacle of War and the Question of Emplotment

The study of the spectacle cannot be restricted to the constructed images of war presented by war posters, novels and film, but must also consider how these representations themselves become a part of the lived experience of war. The Gulf War, as the first live television war, dissolves the distinction between media and real events as both constitute the drama of battle. Both George Bush and Saddam Hussein watched CNN to keep them informed of whatever actions were being ascribed to them. In this way, the

spectacle forms a feedback loop as what is presented by the spectacle is a war whose character is in part that of a media event. Yet the spectacle is not to be equated with Baudrillard's simulation whose space "is no longer that of the real, nor of truth" (Baudrillard 4). Baudrillard defines simulation as a phase of the image which "bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum" (11). The spectacle, incapable of the self-engendering qualities of Baudrillard's simulation, always bears a relation to the reality of complex power formations present at both the moment of the image's production and that of its reception.

Yet the sense of the spectacle of war also involves a realization, on the part of the observer, that the war has a theatrical or mediated quality. In other words, the war itself unfolds in a hyper-media space in which events copy or mirror narratives and images present in popular American culture. The spectacle of war produces a number of effects which exceed the classical notion of representation. In Larry Heinemann's Paco's Story, the narrator informs us that the company stationed at Firebase Sweet Pea heard the Vietcong whisper "GI, you die tonight!" (6). Paco replies to the company, "What do these zips think this is, some kind of chickenshit Bruce Dern-Michael J. Pollard-John Wayne movie?" (6). The exchange is shaped by media in a way which eludes any simple analysis of a particular film's content. The war before the protagonist's eyes seems to both copy and

mutate a previous series of narratives and signs. The war becomes, to employ a term from Pynchon's Gravity's Rainbow, a paracinematic spectacle unfolding in a space which appears to copy and transform a host of narratives. The war is already a war movie, just as for the youth in The Red Badge of Courage the battle consists of war stories and blown newspapers. Dispatches stands as the most detailed and fascinating account of the hyper-media space that was the Vietnam War, a war which eluded the static reference points of physical geography and which could only be understood in the context of a constant rush of images and associations. To travel through Vietnam was to cross a hyper-media terrain where experience became, in an almost inexplicable fashion, cinematic: "Life-as-movie, war-as-(war) movie, war-as-life; a complete process if you got to complete it, a distinct path to travel, but dark and hard" (Herr 58).

We have stated before how master narratives legitimize war, in part, by the representation of war as spectacle to civilian populations. From this it follows that a sense that the actual war has a spectacular quality may initiate a radical new consideration of war on the part of the observer. For the experience of war is characterized by the soldier's expectations of war and the narratives that allow an individual to make sense of war. Moreover, narratives of legitimation function by presenting codified images of war which are frequently refuted by actual wartime experience. The gap between expectation and experience may compel an



individual to re-emplot not only his or her own personal narrative but also the narrative of the war itself. The need for re-emplotment is found in the common motif of protagonist rejecting, in an interpretive gesture which questions war-affirmative narratives so as to arrive at a new adequate understanding of the past. This new narrative may view war itself as a sham or ruse staged by powers who remain hidden behind the veil of history.

Traditionally, war has always posed a certain crisis for representation, in that a war or battle always possesses a certain quality of the sublime which escapes either immediate perception or the entirety of historical records. Even if I am in the midst of battle, broadcasting live to television viewers, I can never see the entire battle. The observer watches events as signs of a war which also occur outside any one geographical location. Now, personal war stories embody the lived experience of war whereas written histories of war--as a series of battles and political events--are in some sense fictions which attempt to make sense of the phantasm of war.<sup>5</sup> Individuals can never experience "the war" as such, they can only narrate their personal stories. The war, as a collective narrative, is a spectacular phantasm which subsumes individual narratives under its all-embracing rubric. As the interpretation of these signs of war occurs in relation to master narratives, once the values of the master narrative are questioned then these signs become open to a new project of interpretative

reading. The task of the protagonist becomes that of re-emploting both personal and collective war narratives. The process of re-emplotment entails a loss of value and meaning as the master narrative--which had provided a sense making structure for the war--is rejected as inadequate. For the questioning protagonist the sense of war as spectacle essentially places power on the level of the sublime, in that those forces which control and stage the war are never apparent but are always absent from the experience of battle. The protagonist, like a detective, is left with signs and traces of power which must be pieced together according to some method.

While Andrews in Dos Passos's Three Soldiers at the outset of World War I understands the war as the expression of the will of a common mass, by the end of the novel he views war as the natural expression of the machine-like state whose aim is nothing less than the total destruction of all personal individuality. In Andrews's romantic view, the war between nations is only a staged truth, as the real war is between the mass-produced people of the military state and artistic individuals. Once the protagonist rejects the narratives which have provided war with a sense of meaning, we witness a glimpse of paranoia as previous notions of "our side" and "us" flip over to the ubiquitous "they" who have staged the war for their own dark purposes. From Crane to Pynchon, to reject the master narrative and to re-emplot the war according to one's own interpretive

faculties is, in some sense, to become paranoid--which is not to say that one suffers from paranoid delusions--as war appears as a staged spectacle which hides hidden orders of power not named or apparent in the master narrative.

### The Rise of the Spectacle in the Modern American War Novel

The rise of mass media such as the press, film, and television transform war by allowing for the seemingly endless proliferation of the spectacle. Although my students have never fought or experienced war, their papers offered numerous electronic memories of the war: the withdrawal from Saigon, the bombing of Libya, the Panama invasion (although few saw the last two as examples of "real" war). They remembered what they had seen on television and at the movies. The presentation of these narratives is the site of an ideological contest as to how the war is to be remembered. Once the class read novels such as Heinemann's Paco's Story, they were shocked to discover that some American soldiers in Vietnam smoked marijuana and mutilated bodies. What is perhaps suprising is that with few exceptions most students remembered the war according to the logic of the master narrative which legitimized American involvement in Vietnam. With few exceptions they considered the war a just fight against communism so that democracy could be maintained in Vietnam. Long after the war is declared over, the contest of representations continues to be fought. In the battle for

popular memory of Vietnam, the master narrative appears-- from my admittedly limited discussion with freshman students--to have succeeded in justifying the war.

Rather than focussing exclusively on any one war or conflict, I have chosen to address the question of how to chart a certain rise in the spectacle within the American war novel. The development of new media transforms war as surely as the invention of the bayonet, the machine gun, and the guided missile. For if, in Ian Clark's words, "The idea of war is a major factor in the way it is waged," then the development of new media has led to changes in the very notion of war (11). The war novel reflects the impact of the proliferation of the spectacle on both the practice of war and the task of remembering the past. For with each new development in mass media, and with each successive war, the space of war becomes increasingly spectacularized. The war novelist becomes both historian and cartographer, struggling to both emplot a narrative and to chart the media terrain of war.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>"The warrior's knowledge falls under Michel Foucault's conception of 'subjugated knowledges.' Such knowledge is below the threshold of 'scienticity,' not in the sense that its propositions are poorly formed or that its claims to knowledge are always invalid, but rather that such stories or accounts do not follow the social and intellectual rules governing who can be a serious thinker and the correct form for serious ideas and important facts." James William Gibson, The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986), 462.

<sup>2</sup>My definition of a master narrative of war as a primary vehicle for the transmission of wartime ideology is suggested by Dana Polan's Power and Paranoia: History, Narrative, and the American Cinema, 1940-1950 (New York: Columbia UP, 1986). In his introduction to this book, Polan describes a story from the August 13, 1945 issue of Life magazine which graphically displays the burning of a Japanese soldier: "On the left-hand page, a series of black-and-white photograph panels, proceeding from left to right and from top to bottom, chronicle the flame-thrower killing of a Japanese by an Australian, America's ally. A narrative, then--the pictures form a ministory of victory and death, the victory represented according to a dominant wartime ideology, represented for an audience back home so it can follow and situate itself in relation to the man's narrative. The narrative might seem to sum up the war, to show it as a kind of participatory drama even for those persons who can participate only through the pages of the magazine" (Polan 1). This narrative constitutes a master narrative because in wartime the full weight of the state lies behind the articulation and propagation of a dominant wartime ideology.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted by Michael Kronenwetter in his Politics and the Press: Issues in American History (New York: Franklin Watts, 1987), 59.

<sup>4</sup>Timothy Sweet notes that this phrase does not actually appear in the first 1875 edition of Walt Whitman's Memoranda During the War but was added as a summary comment in Whitman's Specimen Days. See Timothy Sweet, Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1990), 211.

<sup>5</sup>"As for the phantasm, it is 'excessive' with respect to the singularity of the event, but this 'excess' does not designate an imaginary supplement adding itself to the bare reality of facts; nor does it form a sort of embryonic generality from which the organization of the concept gradually emerges. To conceive of death or a battle as a phantasm is not to confuse them either with the old image of death suspended over a senseless accident or with the future concept of a battle secretly organizing the present disordered tumult; the battle rages on from one blow to the next and the process of death indefinitely repeats the blow, always in its possession, which it inflicts once and for all." Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews, trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977), 177.

CHAPTER 2  
THE RISE OF THE SPECTACLE: FROM CRANE TO THE GREAT WAR

A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now.

It is too late. The Evacuation still proceeds, but it's all theatre. (Thomas Pynchon Gravity's Rainbow, 3)

If war is all theatre, then when did it become so? The earliest written war story is the Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh of Erech, in which Gilgamesh plans to fight the rulers of Kish over disputed water rights (O'Connell 35). Why would anyone want to write such a story? Perhaps war stories have always appealed to some aspect of the human imagination. O'Connell claims that "to say the Iliad was the Greeks' favorite story vastly understates the case. In their eyes it epitomized everything that was Greek" (45). Greek audiences loved to hear tales of battles. They must have admired the theatrical ingenuity of the Trojan horse and imagined the combat between heroes as the poet sang his song.

Crane and the Spanish-American War

But what happens when a reading public demands not just stories from the past but news of current battles? The youth in Crane's The Red Badge of Courage imagines war to be the

stuff of chivalric battles, an affair of "heavy crowns and high castles" (5). He knows the battles of the present war fall short of the splendor of Homer: "They might not be distinctly Homeric, but there seemed to be much glory in them. He had read of marches, sieges, conflicts, and he had longed to see it all" (3).

Amy Kaplan argues that the rise of mass-circulation newspapers in the decade of the 1890s stimulated a desire for war as spectacle. In this section, I will explore the rise of the yellow press and discuss how the success of The Red Badge of Courage and Crane's emergence as a literary phenomenon is tied to the wide circulation of these newspapers. My reading here is as concerned with the critical reception of The Red Badge of Courage as with the actual content of the novel itself. For by paying close attention to the critical reception of the novel we are able to formulate how Crane's work constructs war as spectacle and how this spectacle appealed to his readers. Moreover, the first American war novel announces itself as a literary form concerned with challenging representations of war--from Homer to veterans' tales--so as to emplot war in a radically new way. Examining newspaper coverage of the Spanish-American War allows us to see how the mass media generate desires which transform the world they report. While it goes without saying that the practice of war changes with the development of new weapons such as the stirrup, the pike, the cannon and the bayonet, we should also note that

the rise of mass-circulation newspapers forever alters modern war.

### The Rise of the Yellow Press

The period 1894-1898 marks the rise of the press and the beginning of the circulation war between Pulitzer's New York World and Hearst's New York Journal. One result of this circulation war was the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898. At first, newspaper stories concentrated on incidents of filibustering as Cuban loyalists based in New York gave covert support to insurrectionists in Cuba engaged in fighting their Spanish colonial rulers. As tension grew between Spain and the United States, the two rival newspapers continued to present exaggerated accounts of Spanish atrocities against Cubans-- in particular lurid tales of Spaniards molesting women. The effect of these stories on the reading public was tremendous; material from both the New York World and the New York Journal was sold to other newspapers as well as wired to other news services who were members of the Associated Press (Kobre 279).

The story that left President McKinley with no political choice but to declare war on Spain was the report of the explosion, in the Havana Harbor, of the U.S.S. Maine on January 24, 1898 in which 260 crew members were killed. Although the cause of the explosion was unknown, the New York Journal offered a \$50,000 reward for information



leading to the detention of the perpetrators of the explosion. The Journal whipped up public outrage by claiming, without evidence, that divers had found proof that the explosion was an act of sabotage and published a fake cable from the captain of the Maine to the defense secretary that stated that the ship was not blown up by accident. This was the story that led to the widespread adoption of the front-page headline by newspapers in the United States. Circulation figures for the New York World soared from 800,000 to 1,000,000 for both morning and evening editions leading up to the war (Kobre 290). On the day war was declared the circulation figure for the World peaked at 1,300,000. Despite a cable from the Spanish Government clearly stating that Spain would grant autonomy to Cuba, President McKinley, under pressure by the press and public opinion, declared war.

That Stephen Crane came to prominence in such a period of time has already been noted by Amy Kaplan. Kaplan must be credited as one of the first critics writing on Crane to recognize that the rise of mass-circulation newspapers in the 1890s stimulated public demand to read about war as a spectacular entertainment. From Kaplan's work we conclude that a sense of war as spectacle arises in the new set of relations between reader and writer present in the rise of mass-circulation newspapers, rather than being a technologically determined shift caused by the invention of photography and cinema. In such a set of relations, Kaplan

argues, the reader demands to see war through the eyes of the journalist as spectator. "Reporters often made themselves or their colleagues the heroes of their stories and the act of reporting the main plot" (Kaplan 103).

The success of the short 1894 version of Crane's novel is a testament to the power of newspaper syndicates. Crane first submitted the manuscript to S. S. McClure's syndicate, where it sat in McClure's office for six months. Frustrated with the delay, Crane finally took the novel to Irving Bacheller, who with his partner James W. Johnson ran the New York Press Syndicate. The Syndicate's power to distribute Crane's work was in part responsible for his rise to literary stardom: "John Berryman estimated that the story was carried by 750 newspapers across the country. Incredibly large as the number seems, it is probably accurate" (Katz 26). The widespread distribution offered by newspaper syndicates, as well as the accessibility of the newspaper form, allowed Crane--like the Spanish-American War he was soon to report--to become an overnight sensation.

### The Red Badge of Courage

In order to appreciate the construction of the spectacle in The Red Badge of Courage, we need to consider the comments of those critics of the 1895 Appleton edition who were struck by what they saw as the "imaginative" and "realistic" qualities of the novel. Two questions are raised in our consideration of these critics: what features

of the novel are seen by these critics as realistic? And what do these features tell us about Crane's construction of war?

Early reviewers favorable to The Red Badge of Courage generally praise two main features of the novel as realistic and imaginative. The novel is unique in its rejection of patriotic rhetoric and sentiment, focussing instead on the concrete and specific details of the youth's story. The novel's realism, then, lies in part in its emphasis on the small narrative of the youth's tale. The novel's meticulous attention to the youth, along with its concomitant refusal to discuss the broader political issues raised by the war, is viewed as imbuing the work with realistic power. An unsigned review in the New York Times of 19 October 1895 claims, "It is as a picture which seems to be extraordinarily true, free from any suspicion of ideality, defying every accepted tradition of martial glory, that the book commends itself to the reader" (Weatherford 88). Crane's refusal to emplot the war as an epic history--in the manner of Tolstoy's War and Peace--along with his rejection of the language of patriotism announces the novel as a work of extraordinary realistic power.

In order to represent to the reader the petit recit of Henry's adventure, outside the direct first-person form of the veteran's story, the novel effectively parodies any patriotic rhetoric that would ascribe a set of meaningful values to Henry's instinctive actions and comic blunders.

N. E. Dunn has commented on the mock epic character of the novel, in which ironic correspondences are established between the youth and the Iliad: "Not only does he [Crane] establish and maintain parallels with the Iliad, he inverts the parallels--as a means of satirizing both the absurdity of war in general and Henry Fleming in particular" (272). The mock-epic flavor of The Red Badge of Courage is inseparable from its realism, as the mock epic clears a space for the narrative outside the constraints of every tradition of martial glory. The narrative's aloof and ironic treatment of Henry and his world both inscribes and questions all of the gallant martial values which Henry has absorbed from romance fiction. The epic is maintained, as Dunn suggests, by stock epithets and the formulaic repetition of certain phrases, but only at an absurd level, and this allows the novel to be both allegorical and realistic at the same time.

Readers also found Crane's attention to Henry's responses to be a source of the novel's realism, as detailed descriptions of Henry's psychological reactions to battle create the simulated experience of war. George Wyndham's article, which appeared in the January 1896 edition of the New Review, praises the "sensuous impressions" created by Crane and says of the book: "It leaves, in short, such indelible traces as are left by the actual experience of war" (Weatherford 111). It was Crane's emphasis on the sensation of battle, rather than the politics of war, that

captured the attention of Bachelier when he first read the manuscript McClure failed to publish: "My wife and I spent more than half the night reading it aloud to each other," he wrote. "We got far along in the story, thrilled by its power and vividness" (quoted in Katz 26). Bachelier instinctively knew he had stumbled upon a work capable, in spite of its length, of capturing the public's imagination if published in serial form.

Crane believed that sensuous impressions were exactly what veterans' tales failed to convey. His major historical source for the novel was Century Illustrated Magazine's "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," which was first serialized in the magazine and then collected and published in four volumes in 1884. Crane was struck by the dry emphasis on external action in these tales and their failure to express the sensations of battle: "I wonder that some of these fellows don't tell how they felt in those scraps! They spout eternally of what they did, but they are as emotionless as rocks!" (quoted in Katz 14). These narratives lack the ability to convey the spectacle of war as a simulated experience, as their emplotment of the battles they narrate does not readily allow the reader to identify with the narrator. Crane's skill as a writer lies, in part, in his ability to create an exciting war narrative in which the reader feels that he has had a taste of combat experience. Crane was so successful at this that some

reviews immediately presumed that the author of The Red Badge of Courage could only be a Civil War veteran.<sup>1</sup>

Crane's success with the syndicated and book versions of The Red Badge of Courage lies in the vitality of experience offered by the novel, a vitality not previously found in war fiction. Crane supplements existing Civil War narratives by providing the additional fictional quality of sensation to the war story, and it is the vividness of these sensations that was taken as a testament to the imaginative power of the young novelist.<sup>2</sup> The fictional addition of sensation allowed the novel to appear truer to the reality of war than the accounts of eye-witnesses who lacked the imaginative ability to convey their own experience in a captivating manner.

The emphasis on Henry's emotional responses to combat announces a break with the generic formulations present in first-hand veteran accounts of battle. In order to understand what the experience of war is really like, we generally turn to documents, love letters from soldiers, and first-hand accounts of battle. Yet some astute reviewers of the novel were aware that such primary historical material conveys little to the reader. George Wyndham, in the New Review, January 1896, writes:

But, on second thought, we remember that such love-letters as have been published are, for the most part, not nearer to life than romantic literature, but further removed from it by many stages: that they are feeble echoes of conventional art---not immediate reflections, but blurred impressions of used plates carelessly copied from meretricious paintings. And so it is

with the evidence at first hand upon war. The letters and journals of soldiers and subordinate officers in the field are often of a more pathetic interest than most love letters; but to the searcher after truth they are still disappointing, for they deal almost exclusively with matters beyond the possibilities of the writer's acquaintance. They are all of surmises--of what dear ones are doing at home, or of the enemy's intentions and the general's plans for outwitting him: they reflect the writer's love and professional ambition, but hardly ever the new things he has heard and seen and felt. And when they attempt these things they sink to the level of the love-letters, and become mere repetitions of accepted forms. (Weatherford 106-107)

For Wyndham, Crane's imagination is able to provide a more accurate account of the reactions and experiences of soldiers in the field than veterans themselves, who, having no mastery of literary arts, are only able to express themselves in conventional generic forms. The novel offers itself as simulacrum and supplement. It passes as a false copy of a veteran's own story which is more authentic than the real thing.

#### Crane and the Rise of the Spectacle

Crane's ability to present spectacular war stories was clearly hindered by his selection of real battles as his subject material. An unsigned review in The Spectator of Crane's posthumous Great Battles of the World (1901) declares that the work

suggests the literary paradox that one of the writers who has expressed warfare in the clearest terms of literature merely dimmed his talent by the actual sight of a battle and the study of military history. (Weatherford 295)

We should bear in mind, however, that Crane's final book only foregrounds the style and practice of his work as a war journalist. The disappointment felt in reading Great Battles of the World and much of Crane's wartime reports comes from the emphasis these reports place, at the loss of accounts of psychological responses to combat, on external action. Yet Crane's wartime reports challenge some of the conventions of yellow press journalism. If yellow journalism favors the sensational and the extravagant aspects of war, Crane's reports point to the indifference of nature towards human suffering and the role chance plays in all military affairs. Crane is perhaps the first American war author to detail the chance operations which constitute the field of battle. The battle is chaotic, as the course of its action eludes and escapes human reason and control. We can emplot a narrative account of a battle which arranges events in a meaningful order, but whether an individual soldier lives or dies is essentially random.

In an incident reminiscent of the casual death of the officer in "An Episode of War," Crane reports how in the battle of Velesino--the key military engagement of the Greco-Turkish war--death unsuspectedly comes at the most absurd moments: "I noticed one lieutenant standing up in the rear of a trench rolling a cigarette, his legs wide apart. In this careless attitude a shot went through his neck" (Reports 21). In reporting these random incidents, Crane transgresses the conventions of many war narratives, in



which actions and events have a martial significance. There is nothing heroic or noble in rolling a cigarette, nor is any sacrifice present in this meaningless death. Such moments are crucial to Crane's sense of realism and indicate that in his journalistic pieces he constructs the spectacle of war not as a media event or a display of heroism, but rather as the play of chance and indifference in human affairs.

From Crane's work and the rise of the yellow press we can formulate a general tendency regarding the representation of war as spectacle in the period between 1885 and the turn of the century. The demands of the newspaper-buying public--itself influenced by the press--are satisfied by the spectacle of war as media event. The Spanish-American War is a war composed more of newspaper reports than military engagements. Its origins lie in the circulation war between Hearst and Pulitzer which exacerbated the deterioration of relations between Spain and America. To maintain his public support President McKinley was forced to stage a war. The rise of mass media involves a collapse of the distinction between real and reported events, in that rather than simply representing war, media coverage itself constitutes the events of the conflict. The battle has to be reported in accordance with the tastes of the readership who buy the newspaper, and in the absence of any immediate scoops new conflicts need to be produced for the audience at home:

When in 1896 the illustrator Fredric Remington complained to Hearst from Havana that nothing was happening, Hearst reportedly responded, "You furnish the pictures and I'll furnish the war." To keep his promise, Hearst filled his front page with pictures of Spanish atrocities at the same time that he started the modern sports page.  
(Kaplan 102-3)

Hearst and Pulitzer staged war as much as they reported events, although Pulitzer's jingoism was perhaps a response to the intense circulation war between the two rivals. It is in this set of relations between reader and producer that the headline is born, and with it a whole new politics of reading which favors immediacy and seizing the reader's attention. Pulitzer's reluctance to permanently adopt the headline led him to destroy all large letters immediately after the end of the Spanish-American War. Hearst, however, continued to employ bold letters and the pressures of a competitive business led to their swift adoption by rival papers (Kobre 294). The new phenomena of the headline both conditioned and reflected the public demand for immediate and exciting news.

Aside from its construction as media event, the spectacle of war is also offered to the public as the realistic simulation of combat experience. Crane offers a spectacular realism in which the reader derives pleasure from the simulation of combat. In this way The Red Badge of Courage, as the first American war novel, has similarities to Erich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front. Both offer to their audience the exciting promise of a

realism which "tells war as it is" by concentrating on an individual's experience of battle. This is what Crane delivers in The Red Badge of Courage but what he fails to deliver in a good part of his war reporting and in Great Battles of the World.

### The Great War

In The Great War And Modern Memory, Paul Fussell persuasively argues that the experience of trench warfare was essentially both horrific and ironic. Naive young men, their heads full of romantic notions of bravery in battle, enlisted to fight and die in a bloody, futile war. For those who survived such catastrophes as the Somme affair, in which 60,000 were killed or wounded in one day, only an ironic consciousness allowed them to make sense of their own experience. Commenting on soldiers' memoirs of the war, Fussell suggests that the trench experience is characterized by the soldier realizing, in a moment of ironic insight, the enormous difference between his expectation of war and the terrible reality of his situation (Great War 30). The horrors of the Great War involve more than sheer physical suffering, they also involve the destruction of an entire peacetime mythos of the fair play, valor, bravery and honor of warfare.

For Fussell, the Great War inaugurates the birth of modern ironic consciousness as one of the primary means an individual makes sense of the world. The emergence of irony

challenges the position and status of a whole corpus of discourses as soldiers learnt to mistrust the sentiments of poetic high diction. Fussell observes that before the war "One could use with security words which a few years later, after the war, would constitute obvious double entendres. One could say intercourse, or erection, or ejaculation without any risk of evoking a smile or a leer" (Great War 23). Fussell then adds that "Even the official order transmitted from British headquarters to the armies at 6.50 on the morning of November 11, 1918, warned that 'there will be no intercourse of any description with the enemy'" (Great War 23). From the perspective of a modern sensibility, pre-war language often displays a naive disregard of its own erotic content. The Great War precipitates the end of an innocent language--henceforth the languages of love, honor and authority will be susceptible to ironic scrutiny and it is the birth of this scrutiny which constitutes one of the most enduring cultural effects of the war.

The Great War and Modern Memory reappraises war literature by exploring the complex relationship between the experience of war and the cultural framework available to make sense of that experience. Fussell states in his preface:

I have focused on places and situations where literary tradition and real life notably transect, and in doing so I have tried to understand something of the simultaneous and reciprocal process by which life feeds materials to literature while literature returns the favor by conferring forms upon life. And I have been concerned with something more: the way the

dynamics and iconography of the Great War have proved crucial political, rhetorical, and artistic determinants on subsequent life. At the same time the war was relying on inherited myth, it was generating new myth, and that myth is part of the fiber of our own lives. (Great War ix)

According to Fussell, if we are to understand war literature we must first consider the cultural framework available to make sense of the experience of war, and then the ways that the war itself becomes part of the inherited mythic structure of everyday life. War literature involves a series of interactions between individual experience and the cultural definitions and re-definitions of that experience as it passes into a collective modern memory. Fussell posits war fiction as part of a cultural process which transforms individual experience into a collective mythic memory of the war.

The process of remembering--for both the individual and society at large--exists in relation to the spectacle. Stanley Cooperman's account of pro-war literature emphasizes the role the spectacle plays in the writer's appeal to the reader's imagination:

For novelists like Miss [Willa] Cather . . . war was spectacle; it was authentically stirring, replete with trumpets, "dignified death," the red badge of courage, cheering populations, and bronzed warriors of tomorrow. (Cooperman 32)

If, as Fussell claims, war fiction mediates the passage of experience from individual to cultural memory, then propaganda and pro-war literature, as a set of discursive practices which employ the spectacle to achieve a set of

desired effects, establish a context for the transmission of narratives. For propaganda does more than play on the prejudices and fears of an intended audience; its very spectacular nature serves to effectively subjugate the mundane narrative of the veteran who is often unable to compete with the certainty of values offered by propaganda's representation of wartime experience. In such a set of relations between propaganda, misinformation, and civilian populations, the novel becomes the site of a contest as to how war is to be remembered. In World War I, this contest involved fundamental disagreements over the role economic and political interests played in the war, that is to say whether the United States fought to "make the world fit for democracy," as a popular slogan of the day stated, or to ensure the economic interests of American companies.

Yet the political dimensions of the war novel exceed the degree to which the plot and narrative point of view correspond to the master narratives at the disposal of both conservative and radical authors (on the right, the master narrative of war as a fight for freedom and an assertion of national power, on the left, war as an instance of capitalist expansion and exploitation) so as to include the politics of the production of the spectacle. Whereas sentimental pro-war fiction portrays war as a glamorous spectacle, First World War novelists such as Hemingway, Dos Passos and Cummings redirect the reader's gaze in new ways. Rather than depicting war in a lavish fashion, these writers

focus on the particular and the mundane while suggesting the political dimension present within the gaze of the soldier as tourist. Their work marks a new aesthetics of the gaze that disrupts the conventions of propaganda and pro-war literature as it strives to offer not only a different account of wartime, but a new sensitivity to the politics of the spectacle.

The anti-war novels of the post-war period foreground aspects of the viewing process, in particular the selection and description of people and objects worthy of interest, while displaying a self-reflexive sense of the subjective quality of all constructed images within a narrative. For example, in Cummings's The Enormous Room, the prisoners Jean Le Negre and Zoo-Loo are the objects of the narrator's intense gaze that finds them infinitely fascinating. In his introduction to the novel Cummings writes, "When this book wrote itself, I was observing a negligible portion of something incredibly more distant than any sun; something more unimaginably huge than the most prodigious of all universes. . . . The individual" (viii). If while interned in the enormous room of La Ferté Cummings comes to realize "fully and irrevocably and for perhaps the first time the meaning of civilization," then the remedy for civilization as prison camp lies in learning to see the world and each individual with new eyes (167). The romantic gaze of the narrator is offered as a contrast to the panoptical gaze of the prison plantons and officials. As propaganda and

pro-war fiction represents war as an attractive display of military strength and moral superiority, those works seeking to refute these images of war attempt to devise entirely new ways of seeing.

### Propaganda in World War I

The enormous propaganda machine of World War I appropriated war as spectacle and presented nostalgic images of war which suggested that current battles were still being fought in the era of cavalry warfare. The anti-war novels of the early American modernists are not simply rejections of war, they are also attempts to bring representations of war up to date by recognizing the reality of the trench and the prison camp. The modernity of modernism erupts within a crisis of representation surrounding the nature and practice of war and the role of the individual soldier. Propaganda's employment of traditional values raises the cultural stakes of the war, as these values are in turn questioned by those who viewed the war as abhorrent. Ezra Pound's poem "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" perhaps offers the most striking instance of the breakdown of pre-war values and language. The young soldiers suffer and die "For an old bitch gone in the teeth/For a botched civilization." The enemy is no longer the bosch but the botched "old men's lies" which send them to their deaths.

As the largest single poster campaign of the early twentieth century, the recruitment poster campaign



effectively applied to the war effort the skills and practices of early mass commodity advertising. The antiquated character of World War I propaganda is evident in war posters which demonstrate a reluctance to display current military technology. A certain naivete regarding the character of modern war is found in these posters; they are already old fashioned in the images they employ. The war poster invokes the past in the hope of calling the citizen to do his duty. A poster for "Pershing's Crusaders" which proclaims itself "The first official American war picture" depicts Pershing riding into battle--not a tank or trench in sight--accompanied by the ghosts of Christian knights.<sup>3</sup> This poster combines photography and drawing in an attempt to drive home the message that Pershing's crusaders never ride alone--the spirits of past crusaders follow them into battle. The poster promises that Pershing has crusaders on his side and that the war to be fought will be practically medieval--an affair of horses and swords rather than shells and mustard gas. The majority of American recruitment posters depict weapons in symbolic terms; rather than weapons of mass destruction we see an abundance of swords of justice, flying eagles, and hand-held shields. The posters stage war as a spectacular allegory, rather than a battle between nation-states. If the Kaiser is the devil, and the Germans the embodiment of evil on earth, then the war presented by these posters has all the trappings of a stage production of The Fairy Queen. Only

posters for the Tank Corps suggest that modern war might be a more cruel, less dignified affair than bygone wars.

During the period before American involvement in World War I, the American public was fascinated with the spectacle of war. This fascination is evident in the rise of the American war film. The first major American feature film is David Wark Griffith's Civil War epic The Birth of a Nation (1915). In The Motion Picture Goes to War, Larry Ward presents a detailed account of cinema's treatment of war throughout World War I. During the neutrality years, the public was eager to see footage of the war overseas, but the time taken for the film to be shot, processed, edited and shipped made film an unsuitable medium for covering current events. It was easier to fake footage of the war:

faced with a seemingly insatiable demand for war films, unscrupulous film producers found a far easier and safer method of giving the public what they thought it wanted. Armed with a few guns, some actors, old uniforms and a willing cameraman, such producers could easily create stirring "war films" that exceeded the quality of films that could actually be shot "in the field" (Ward 25).

Ward notes that the designation 'official film' was devised as a means of convincing the public, after the press had revealed the inauthenticity of the staged films, that not all war films were fake. The establishment of the Committee of Public Information in 1918 was the government's first attempt to develop film systematically as a medium for propaganda. Yet it was private film companies who produced the most vicious anti-German propaganda films, such as To

Hell with the Kaiser (Metro 1918) and The Claws of the Hun (Paramount 1918), along with the infamous The Kaiser, Beast of Berlin (Universal-Jewell, 1918). These films depicted the Kaiser as either the devil incarnate or a raving lunatic frothing at the mouth, and "fostered a terrifying image of German people and their culture" in which "the common German soldier was either portrayed as a mindless automaton, or a helpless pawn in the hands of a high command" (Ward 56).

John Dos Passos's Three Soldiers is the first war novel to depict the effects of propaganda films on a stationed army. After a rousing chorus of "Hail, Hail, the gang's all here;/We're going to get the Kaiser," Andrews watches a film depicting German soldiers marching through Belgium bayonetting civilians on their way (21). Andrews, a Harvard student who enlisted to escape the burdens of his individuality, feels a bond between himself and the audience. In a scene which prefigures Winston's experience of the "four-minute hate" in Orwell's 1984, Andrews "felt blind hatred stirring like something that had a life of its own in the young men about him" (23). By the end of the film, the audience seethes with a hatred for all that is German. Andrews hears one man say "I'd give a lot to rape some of those goddam German women" to which another man replies "I hate 'em too . . . men, women, children and unborn children" (24). Cinema offers the sense of a collective will, in which individuality (not to mention morality) is temporarily suspended in the expression of the

mutual hate of a common enemy. In this way, propaganda's dehumanization of the enemy mirrors the loss of the viewer's own sense of individuality. Indeed, in the course of the novel, we see how Andrews, Fuselli and Christfield are stripped of all individual worth so as to become efficient parts of the war machine.

The community forged by the propaganda of the Great War was resistant to hearing the wartime experiences of those who returned home. Propaganda binds a community together, but it also blinds them in that the values of propaganda may become common truths for civilian populations. In the case of the Great War, we must also note that Anglo-American propaganda with its demonic hordes of German troops razing Belgian towns was often more spectacular, more appealing to the imagination, than the truth. In Hemingway's story "Soldier's Home" from In Our Time, the young man Krebs returns from the war only to discover that he has to lie if he wants to be listened to, as "[h]is town had heard too many atrocity stories to be thrilled by actualities" (IOT 69). To his surprise, Krebs finds "that to be listened to at all he had to lie, and after he had done this twice he, too, had a reaction against the war and against talking about it" (IOT 69). Krebs feels alienated from the community because they refuse to hear his story, and this refusal signifies the community's preference for lies over the mundane truth. By the end of the story Krebs is unable to pray with his mother, unable to say that he loves her, and no longer cares

about becoming "a credit to the community" (IOT 75).

Stanley Cooperman suggests that the widespread embracing of war by the clergy led to a rejection by many writers of the "assumptions and rhetoric of religion itself" (20). In "Soldier's Home" the rhetoric of religion and romantic love are dismissed as dangerous fictions which allow a community to come together, but only at the cost of excluding those who no longer accept these fictions as truths. The employment of patriotic and militant Christian rhetoric in speeches, sermons, and posters, results in a devaluation of this rhetoric for those who questioned the very rationale of the war.

Hemingway's "Soldier's Home" effectively conveys the power of propaganda to shape popular memory. Propaganda has the insidious ability to determine contexts for the sharing of oral histories of a veteran's war experiences. How can Krebs convey both the boredom and terror of his own experience to civilians who believe war to be a matter of pomp and valor, of brave soldiers fighting the evil Hun? How can he challenge the expectations and presumptions of his own home town? His own war story is painfully inadequate when compared to the excitement and gore of Belgium atrocity stories. Krebs finds himself unable to accept the common values which bind the town together, because for him the war has exposed these values as empty words. "Soldier's Home" demonstrates that as a manipulative tool for forging a sense of community in wartime, propaganda works as a double-edged

sword. The folks at home believe they know the truth about a war which was fought for the preservation of values integral to the well-being of the community. By mustering support by representing war as a fight for all the community holds dear, propaganda effectively devalues, in the eyes of those who recognize propaganda as a dangerous mixture of lies and half-truths, the very values of the community it calls to action.

### The Grand Tour

The anti-war novels of the post-World War I period sought to question both the assumptions and images of propaganda and the conventions of travel fiction. For in the Great War, American propaganda and pro-war fiction presented a romanticized, idyllic Europe being terrorized by the Hun. For American writers, voluntary enlistment offered the promise of free passage and accomodation to Europe. Eager to leave the "bell jar" of Harvard--as it is named in Nineteen-Nineteen--Dos Passos left for Europe and became a volunteer ambulance-corps driver in 1917. E. E. Cummings also joined the ambulance-corps only to be arrested, after three months service, for receiving letters from William Slater Brown which mentioned the desertion of French troops. Hemingway, after joining the American Red Cross as an ambulance driver serving in Italy, was seriously wounded at Fossalta in July 1918. All of these writers were in some sense seeking the European experience, and the war provided

an added impetus to their desire to leave the United States for travel abroad. In this way, the war itself becomes part of a grand European tour. In American fiction of World War I, the spectacle of war frequently falls under the tourist's gaze as soldiers enjoy the sights of Europe.<sup>4</sup> A striking example of this is found in Dos Passos's Nineteen-Nineteen, where Dick Savage and his college friends enlist as ambulance drivers and find themselves having a wonderful time eating, drinking, and admiring the scenery as they cross the Rhone valley: "They had a magnificent supper in the quiet pink and white town with cêpes and garlic and strong red wine. 'Fellers,' Fred Summers kept saying, 'this ain't a war, it's a goddam Cook's tour'" (1919 218).

Throughout Nineteen-Nineteen, Dos Passos stresses the essentially conservative nature of the tourist gaze. Both Dick Savage and his friends flirt with the notion of denouncing the war, but are finally seduced by the sights of Europe. Unlike Ben Compton, the young Marxist who appears at the end of the novel and whose lot in life is generally a sorry one, Savage never renounces his own gratifications. Dick is, above all else, a hedonist and at times the narrative cannot help poking fun at the ironies of his political consciousness. Dick and his friends denounce the war only in the most pleasant surroundings:

Somebody would be detailed to stand in line at the Copé and buy South-of-France melons and four-franc-fifty champagne. Then they'd take off their shirts to toast their backs and shoulders if it was sunny and sit in the dry fountain eating the melons and drinking the warm cidery champagne

and talk about how they'd go back to the States and start an underground newspaper like La Libre Belgique to tell people what the war was really like. (1919 215)

The France enjoyed by Dick suggests all the pleasures of a continental hitchhiking tour, and the nightmare of the French trenches exists in a world totally removed from his surroundings. Dick's experience of a France replete with cidery champagne and melons contributes to his failure ever to recognize both the political significance of the war and its destructive character. Like a tourist, Dick always remains somewhat detached from the places he visits, and the mobility and speed of his journeys are a sharp contrast to the monotonous immobility of trench warfare. As Dick and his friends pass through the Rhone valley with its cypresses "smelling of the vintage and late fall roses," his cares fall away and "the worry about jail and protest and sedition all seemed a nightmare out of another century" (1919 218). Dick's sense of being on tour embodies all the prestige and power of his social class. For Dick, France has been nothing more than an extended jaunt with his Harvard friends and, like tourists everywhere, he may still return home.

The tourist gaze appears not only in the way characters themselves perceive, and reflect upon, the landscape around them, but also in the very manner in which the narrative constructs the landscape for the reader. In Three Soldiers, descriptions of the French countryside reflect Andrews's own somewhat effete aesthetic sensibilities. The novel aspires



to represent the experiences of three soldiers from diverse social backgrounds: Fuselli, an American-Italian from San Francisco, Christfield, from an Indiana farming family, and the Harvard-educated John Andrews. Whereas the first half of the novel devotes equal attention to all three characters, the latter half clearly establishes Andrews as the central protagonist. The marginalization of Fuselli and Christfield as characters central to the novel's concerns is performed by descriptions that further suggest Andrews's own way of seeing the landscape. Consider this passage from Three Soldiers, where Andrews and Christfield wander through the countryside together:

On both sides of the road were fields of ripe wheat, golden under the sun. In the distance were low green hills fading to blue, pale yellow in patches with the ripe grain. Here and there a thick clump of trees or a screen of poplars broke the flatness of the long smooth hills. In the hedgerows were blue cornflowers and poppies in all colors from carmine to orange that danced in the wind on their wiry stalks. At the turn in the road they . . . could hear the bees droning in the big dull purple cloverheads and in the gold hearts of the daisies. (Soldiers 161-2)

The description of the landscape aspires to be a painting executed with words. We are offered a painted landscape, replete with golden-hearted daisies and 'clumps of trees. The landscape of the Grand Tour itself is a spectacle, a scene to be captured in words or oil. In presenting the landscape in this fashion, the narrative displays some sympathy for Andrews' own artistic aspirations. We are given a view of the French countryside through an eye

intoxicated with the colors and style of French impressionism. The painterly quality of this description suggests an association between the French landscape and art, as if the very countryside itself demanded to be painted or sketched.

Written eleven years after Three Soldiers, Nineteen-Nineteen takes a more sophisticated, self-reflexive approach to representing Americans abroad in wartime Europe. The artistic pretensions of Harvard students who volunteered for service in Europe are presented in a manner that maintains an ironic distance between the narrative voice and characters such as Dick Savage. Whereas Three Soldiers is sympathetic to Andrews's struggle to compose his music, Nineteen-Nineteen quietly laughs at the creative endeavors of Dick and his friends:

Ripley and Steve decided they wanted to learn to draw and spent their days off drawing architectural details or the covered bridge. Schulyer practiced his Italian taking about Nietzsche with the Italian lieutenant. (1919 228)

This constant undercutting by the narrative not only points to the way Dick and his gang are playing the role of rebels and artistes, without any real commitment to the ideals they espouse, but also suggests that drawing, drinking and conversation all are part of the American experience of touring Europe. Nineteen-Nineteen avoids the descriptive pyrotechnics of Three Soldiers, in part because Dos Passos suspects that attempts to paint the French landscape might be symptoms of the American as tourist. By the final

chapters of Three Soldiers, the entire war has become nothing more than another instance of civilization attempting to stifle and crush the individual as artist. The novel closes with Andrews practically handing himself over to the Military Police as the wind blows sheets of his music across the floor. Unlike Three Soldiers, Nineteen-Nineteen no longer champions the cause of the individual artist as hero, presenting instead a more critical view of the American soldier as amateur artist.

The self-reflexive quality of Nineteen-Nineteen lies in the novel's recognition of the provisional, subjective quality of its attempt to record the Zeitgeist of the year 1919. In his struggle to step beyond the tourist gaze of his earlier war fiction, Dos Passos displays an awareness of the impossibility of ever being able to produce a purely objective narrative of American wartime experience. The Camera Eye sections of Nineteen-Nineteen appear to be "miscellaneous collections of stream-of-consciousness fragments from various moments of Dos Passos's life" (Pizer 56). In comparison to the flowery descriptions of the French countryside in Three Soldiers, which are presented to the reader without comment, the Camera Eye sections of Nineteen-Nineteen foreground the part Dos Passos's own subjectivity plays in constructing the spectacle of Dick's grand tour, just as the Newsreel sections point to the common history, as represented by the popular press, which form part of the action of the novel. Dos Passos himself

stated that the Camera Eye sections performed this function: "That's why I put the Camera Eye things in U.S.A. . . . It was a way of draining off the subjective by directly getting in little bits of my own experience" (Quoted in Pizer 57). If Dos Passos finds himself unable ever totally to break free from his Harvard sensibilities, then the novel in gazing at its own camera eye turns this limitation into a subject for its own reflection.

Both Cummings's and Hemingway's novels of the Great War contain elements of travel fiction. Frederic Henry, the protagonist and narrator of Hemingway's A Farewell To Arms, is a volunteer American ambulance driver in the Italian army. Henry's experience of love and war runs counter to the conventions of war, romance and travel novels. Bernard Olsey has documented the numerous titles for the novel Hemingway considered before finally selecting A Farewell To Arms, and many of these titles emphasize Henry's position as tourist. Titles such as: A World To See, The Grand Tour, The Italian Journey, An Italian Chronicle, and The Italian Experience are highly ironic (Olsey 8). Hemingway's Italy shares little with the array of sights promised by a Baedeker Grand Tour, just as the war offers no chance for the soldier to find honor or victory in the pursuit of arms.

The short opening chapter of A Farewell To Arms, which consists of five remarkable paragraphs, effectively disrupts the conventions of travel fiction. In the first two

paragraphs, we are presented with impressionistic details which are pleasing to the eye:

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun, and the water was clear and swift moving in the channels. . . . The plain was rich with crops; there were many orchards of fruit trees and beyond the plain the mountains were brown and bare. (AFTA 3)

Whereas the two opening paragraphs establish a picturesque Italy, the following paragraphs stress the grey, death-like quality of the landscape: "The vineyards were thin and bare-branched too and all the country wet and brown and dead with the autumn" (4). The final sentence of the chapter mentions how seven thousand soldiers died of cholera as a result of the rain. The narrator presents a scenic Italian landscape only to undercut this description by commenting on the barren season of autumn. The constant rain in the novel, outside of any consideration of its symbolic content, works against the codification of Italy present in travel literature. Instead of village streets, warm sunshine, and home cooking, we find constant rain and barren trees. Who would have thought that it rained so much in Italy? We know little of Henry's reasons for enlisting, for when asked for an explanation he refuses to account for his actions. Presumably, before his involvement in the war, he found the prospect of fighting in Italy to be a romantic one. The movement in the opening chapter from a pleasant view of the Italian landscape to a scene of barren autumn trees suggests

a contrast between Henry's past romantic view of Italy and the detached, melancholy character of his present outlook.

As a narrator Henry manipulates, rather than rejects, the conventions of travel literature by recording, with all the fastidious detail of a seasoned traveler, the sights and smells of his journey. Although Henry quips to Catherine that "[t]his is the picturesque front," descriptions of local taverns and scenic mountains occur only in the final Switzerland chapters of the novel (20). In these chapters, Henry's meticulous accounts of Swiss tavern cuisine are strangely out of place given that Catherine lies on her deathbed in a nearby hospital about to bear their child. The disconcerting manner in which the narrative jumps from detailed accounts of tavern lunches to Catherine's suffering suggests that an essential element of Henry's experience, as both soldier and traveller, was the discovery of misery in romantic Europe. Henry has come to see the landscape of Italy and Switzerland with the eyes of a disenchanted tourist. He views his entire life in a detached and dispassionate manner effectively summarized by his comment, repeated almost verbatim within the same paragraph, regarding the maintenance of ambulance cars: "Evidently, it did not matter whether I was there or not" (16).

Henry's often frustrating silence concerning his own emotional responses to the tragic tale he narrates is symptomatic not only of his passage through a war in which officers shoot their own troops, but also of his lack of

feeling or attachment to any one place. His detachment presents his own life as, in the words of a few of Hemingway's rejected titles for the novel, "A World To See" and an "Italian Experience." The tour, stripped of all its romantic and abstract traits, has become a dispassionate journey through Henry's own wartime experience. The novel closes with Henry walking "back to the hotel in the rain" because, like Krebs in "Soldier's Home," there can be no real homecoming (AFTA 332). Henry has become dispossessed-- a man who can return home only to a hotel is a man for whom all life has the detached quality of an eternal tour.

#### Propaganda and the Spectacle of War

What conclusions can be drawn about the emergence of war as spectacle during the period from Crane to the work of American modernists such as Dos Passos, Hemingway, and Cummings? This is an ambitious question, and one which, to be treated with the full attention it deserves, would require a book of its own. However, by maintaining our focus exclusively on the field of the American war novel, we can offer some suggestions. The Spanish-American War has its origins in the circulation war between Pulitzer and Hearst, in which the relation between consumer (as newspaper buyer) and producer involves the consumption and production of news as commodity. During World War I, the war itself was a commodity which was essentially sold to the public through a massive advertising campaign. This is especially

true of American propaganda under the directorship of George Creel, who was appointed Chairman of the Committee of Public Information in April 1917. Peter Buitenhuis, in his study of British and American World War I propaganda and fiction, concludes that "Creel saw the war as a product which he had at all costs to 'sell' to the public, and he was determined to use any means to get the job done" (69). The rise of mass advertising allows for the possibility of a world war which would require the mass mobilization of gargantuan civilian armies. As with the Spanish-American War, in World War I the relationship between civilians as consumers and the government is a mutually determining one as the rise of the war film testifies to the public's demand for images of war. The proliferation of war as a spectacular display entails more than a simplistic manipulation, on the part of a set of controlling interests, of popular desires. Rather, the success of the call to war lies in its recognition, and answer to, a particular set of desires within the populace.

In the Great War, propaganda appropriates the spectacle as its own, in the hope of calling a civilian population to do its duty. Modris Eksteins, in his Rites of Spring: The Great War and The Birth of the Modern Age, reasons that

If the war was reduced, certainly by 1916, to reflex responses, then the assumptions of the civilizations and cultures fighting the war were all-important. And here the crucial catchword for those assumptions was "duty" or devoir of Pflicht. (Eksteins 175)



The call to duty often invoked a spectacular event which hoped to leave the individual with no other morally acceptable course of action than contribution to the war effort. For Americans, before the entry of the United States into the conflict, the war was a series of often spectacular media events. More importantly, each event raised the call for Americans to become involved in the war. While many forces propelled the European nations towards war, the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand of Serbia--itself a spectacular event--pulled the trigger. The two events that, above all else, dragged America into the war were the reports of German atrocities in Belgium and the sinking of the Lusitania. These are both media events in that their historical significance cannot be divorced from questions of representation. In other words, the significance of these events lies in the manner in which they were reported. The question of whether the Germans actually committed atrocities, or whether the Lusitania was indeed carrying munitions, is of secondary importance in understanding the effect of these represented events on the public.

The German invasion of Belgium spawned a plague of rumors which allowed the Allies to represent the invasion as spectacular proof of the debauched nature of German culture. Wild rumors of rape and arson, spread by Belgian refugees, filled the Allied press. In December 1914, the British government formed a special committee to investigate the

validity of these atrocity stories, chaired by the respected historian, Lord Bryce. The findings of this committee were published in the infamous Bryce Report which was, in the words of Peter Buitenhuis, "largely a tissue of invention, unsubstantiated observations by unnamed witnesses, and second-hand eyewitness reports, depending far more on imagination than any other factor" (27). The invasion of Belgium was represented by the Bryce Report and government propaganda as an insult to all decent people, as invading Huns systematically raped Red Cross nurses, bayoneted babies, tortured civilians, and razed towns. Clearly, the success of propaganda lay in its ability to employ the familiar practices of the gutter press. Many key motifs of World War I propaganda are found in Hearst's and Pulitzer's coverage of the Spanish-American war, in particular, the elements of rape present in sensational accounts of Valeriano Weyler's exploits in Cuba, and the sinking of the Maine which foreshadows the emotional impact of the sinking of the Lusitania.<sup>5</sup>

While looking through collections of propaganda posters from the Great War, I was reminded of Guy Debord's observation that "The primary cause of the decadence of contemporary thought evidently lies in the fact that spectacular discourse leaves no room for any reply; while logic was only socially constructed through dialogue" (Comments 29). How true this is of propaganda, which can only be viewed as the end of dialogue and the twilight of

logic. For Hemingway and Cummings, the most effective strategy for combating propaganda lies in the writer addressing the particular as real. The modernist emphasis on the exploration of individual consciousness is in part a reaction against mass media as the conveyor of propaganda. Posters, films, and newspapers communicate only lies and half-truths. The low regard for mass media held by key modernists such as Pound, entails more than a contempt for the mass commodity culture in which, to quote "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," "The tea-rose tea-gown, etc/Supplants the mousseline of Cos," it is rather a reaction against the mobilization of a whole set of traditional values and images by wartime propaganda.

Yet even early war novels such as Three Soldiers, that subscribe to a romantic notion of the individual artist struggling against the hostile and repressive forces of civilization, acknowledge how individual consciousness is both influenced and to a certain degree constituted by propaganda as conveyed by the emerging mass media. The phrase "a world fit for democracy," mouthed by various characters in Three Soldiers, indicates that the individual cannot be totally separated from the recruitment posters, jingoistic sermons, and popular songs which constitute the war effort. An individual's subjectivity exists in relation to a popular mass consciousness which, in turn, shifts and flows according to political and economic forces. The juxtaposition of The Camera Eye and Newsreel sections of USA

demonstrate an awareness of the subtle play between subjectivity and mass culture.

In World War I, the spectacle of war occurs primarily in the domain of propaganda, with the war novels of the "lost generation" challenging the representations of war offered by propaganda and pro-war fiction. However, for a small group of soldiers, the war appears--in the words of the epigraph from Pynchon which opens this chapter--to be "all theatre." For among the practices of modern war introduced in the Great War (including chemical weapons, the tank, use of mass civilian armies, aerial bombing, and propaganda) are the employment of elaborate decoys. Paul Fussell reports that in 1916, S. S. Horsley visited a camouflage factory in Amiens and found it "a wonderful workshop where imitation trees, guns, figures, sandbags, etc., were made of plaster and paper. Most realistic . . . Amongst other subjects was a dead horse, and a dead German, to be used as an observation post" (Quoted in Great War 202). For some soldiers, the war appeared to belong to the world of theatre and cinema rather than the province of real life. Eksteins notes, "It is striking how often references to the cinema appear in the letters, diaries, and reminiscences of soldiers" (223). However, no war novel dares to collapse the space between film, as a medium of representation, and war so as to emplot the war itself as film. While the effects of propaganda are acknowledged by Dos Passos and others, the spectacle remains within the

domain of propaganda (as representation). As we shall see, however, by the time of the second wave of American war fiction of World War II, the spectacle exceeds representations of war. In these novels, the spectacle involves more than issues of propaganda and its effects as the war itself becomes cinematic in nature.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>A short unsigned review printed in the British Saturday Review, 4 January 1896 states: "[The Red Badge of Courage] . . . contain[s], in our opinion, the most realistic description ever published of modern war from the purely subjective standpoint of a private soldier. The author does not appear to be an artist; he seems to be concerned merely with giving an exact account of his most intimate personal feelings, and this account is so impartial in its frankness that it comes to have the significance of universal truth" (Weatherford 99). Weatherford attributes the above unsigned review to Sydney Brooks and notes that the paper retracted their error on 15 April 1896, claiming that their attribution of the novel to a veteran was a testament to the realistic power of the novel.

<sup>2</sup>The following two comments on the novel are typical in their emphasis on sensation. E. J. Edward's editorial in the Philadelphia Press of 8 December 1894 exuberantly claims: "Here was a young man not born until long after the war days had closed, who nevertheless, by power of imagination, by a capacity intuitively to understand the impulses which prevailed in war days, had been able to write a story perhaps the most graphic and truthful in its suggestion of some of the phases of that epoch" (Weatherford 83). This sentiment is echoed in an unsigned review published in the Philadelphia Press, 13 Oct 1895, which declares it remarkable "that so young a writer, born after the war, should have evolved from his imagination purely what strikes the reader as a most impressive and accurate record of actual personal experiences" (Weatherford 84).

<sup>3</sup>This poster and others of interest can be found in Battlelines: World War I Posters From the Bowman Grey Collection. ed. Libby Chenault (Chapel Hill: Rare Book Collection, North Carolina UP, 1988).

<sup>4</sup>In his book The Tourist Gaze, John Urry defines a number of features which characterize the tourist gaze. These features include; the journey and stay in places outside one's routine existence, the noting of different forms of social patterning and a "much greater sensitivity to visual elements of landscape or townscape than is normally found in everyday life" (3).

<sup>5</sup>Valeriano Weyler became Captain-General of the Spanish armies in Cuba in 1895. At that time, four New York papers had reporters in Cuba, who filed accounts of numerous Spanish atrocities on the island. Both the New York World and Journal frequently illustrated accounts with pen sketches drawn by an artist in New York. In The Yellow Press and Gilded Age Journalism, Kobre quotes an article, published on June 1, 1896, which clearly prefigures Belgian atrocity stories: "'I'll make you,' said the Spaniard, and he proceeded to tear off her clothing. He then questioned her anew and receiving no answer from the woman, who was crying hysterically, he unsheathed her sword and fell to cutting and slashing his victim, until her blood covered the floor and she fainted in a corner. Her shrieks and entreaties only served to provoke the brutal laughter of the soldier . . . With a convulsive movement the woman tried to shield her child with her own body, but the merciless bullets did their work. . . ." (283).

CHAPTER 3  
FROM SPECTACLE TO HYPERREAL: WORLD WAR II AS HYPERREAL WAR

American war novels of World War II can be divided into two periods, the first wave of fiction appearing shortly after the war, consisting of novels such as Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead (1948), The Gallery (1947) by John Horne Burns, and James Jones's From Here to Eternity (1951); and the second wave announced by Heller's Catch-22 (1961). Malcolm Cowley neatly summarizes the concerns of the first wave of World War II fiction. Cowley insists that these novels portray war, and military life, as foregrounding the racial and class tensions already present in American society. These tensions are restrained under a military rule which threatens to become a dominant force in civilian society. As the fascistic General Cummings tells Hearn in The Naked and the Dead: "You can consider the army, Robert, as a preview of your future" (324). Cowley adds that the protagonists of these novels are less shocked at the horrors of war than their World War I predecessors, a change he argues reflects a new acceptance of mass brutality: "The American public has become so familiar with horrors recounted from life that it is no longer much impressed with

those described in novels, even if the novels are also based on life" (309).

This familiarity resulted in a return to conventional realist fiction which showed no concern with challenging prevalent representations of the war. The influence of Freud on many World War II novels effectively acknowledges that brutality and mayhem are manifestations of forces within the human psyche. Eric Homberger suggests that "the growing influence of Freud's social thought in the 1940s assisted to empty the war of its political content" (174). According to Homberger, the specific causes and consequences of the war are forgotten by the majority of novelists that present "stark oppositions between characters who endorse a humane and liberal viewpoint and those who love war and killing, or whose temperament is repressive, conservative and fascistic" (175). American and British propaganda of the Great War had expressed an outrage at the inhuman, bestial acts supposedly performed by the Germans in Belgium. In comparison, by the end of World War II, novelists tended to view the bestial as residing within each individual. The tendency was to emplot the war as a psychological drama between the ego and the id, thereby recognizing the enemy as an aspect of one's own psyche. As such, the shocking brutality of the war possessed a faint air of familiarity.

So far we have witnessed a general tendency in the rise of the spectacle in relation to war. Mass media presents war as entertainment and allows for the staging of media



events. Moreover, the development of mass commodity advertising allowed for a massive recruitment campaign for World War I that brought together a wide array of various media for the dissemination of propaganda. In such an historical context, the major war novels of the early modernist period perform a demythologization of the values of pro-war fiction and propaganda. For many of these novelists, the function of the novel was to question the discourse and values of pro-war authority.

Both the first and second wave of World War II novels have little in common with their Great War predecessors. There is no concern with questioning propaganda or bemoaning the horror of the war in a manner similiar to that of World War I. The writers of the "lost generation" show how their experience of war forces them to question the social values inscribed in propaganda and pro-war fiction. In this way, World War I fiction can only be considered in relation to the body of propaganda which forms part of the historic context of its production.

In World War II, however, the spectacle no longer resides solely in the domain of propaganda. When compared to the literature of the Great War, propaganda is hardly an issue. This is not to say that propaganda is entirely ignored. Novels frequently refer to the cliches of Hollywood and British war films, so as to establish an ironic distance between the predictable conventions of screen battles and the chaos of actual combat. Homberger

argues that "The tendency of wartime journalism, and the Hollywood war movie, was to emphasize the individual's role in the war, and to stress that GIs were ordinary Americans with values emerging from American culture" (199). He adds that Mailer's The Naked And the Dead, along with James Jones's trilogy of war novels beginning with From Here To Eternity, challenge this representation by showing dehumanization of the individual within the American military. While Homberger's argument has merit, we should note that the majority of war novels are unconcerned with the subject of propaganda, and that within the novels he discusses the critique of popular representations of war is a secondary rather than a primary theme. In contrast to the novels of Hemingway and Dos Passos, the Second World War novel performs no sustained attack on pro-war rhetoric and propaganda. The values inherent in propaganda are refuted by the world view presented in these works; we can hardly imagine Billy Pilgrim or Yossarian readily identifying with the ideology of war propaganda. However, these novels rarely directly address particular instances of propaganda.

In part, the absence of any such critique reflects the different form and reception of propaganda in World War II. World War I propaganda attempted to appeal to idealistic sentiments within civilian populations. By 1940, the American soldier fighting in World War II was far less idealistic than his Great War predecessor. Paul Fussell goes as far as to claim: "For most of the troops, the war

might just as well have been about good looks, so evanescent at times did its meaning and purpose seem" (Wartime 129). Fussell rejects the commonly held belief that the war was consciously fought as a "good war"--to borrow the title of Studs Terkel's oral history of the period--claiming instead that the rationale (except among U.S. Jews) for the war was revenge against the Japanese for the bombing of Pearl Harbor: "For the troops the war was about avenging that event a thousand-fold" (Wartime 137). Given the cultural memory of the Great War, and the widespread desire for revenge, the rhetoric of war as a fight for noble ideals shows signs of exhaustion. Small wonder, then, that rather than offering slogans such as "A world fit for democracy," 1940s propaganda insistently states that the war is being fought, not for any ideal, but rather for such humble quotidian pleasures as a good hamburger, a sleeping dog by a log fire, and mom's apple pie.

### Beyond the Just War

Yet the question as to how the war was to be remembered remained. The sheer scale of the war itself presented a challenge to the novelist's imagination. What had been lost in the war, and what had changed? What was its legacy? How was the history of the war to be understood? And what form of the novel was to be favored: the epic--which attempted to portray the war on a scale worthy of Tolstoy--or the small-scale novel which concentrated on the specific nuances of

wartime experience? The scale of the war was enormous, perhaps too much for any one author to bear. Prospective novelists might find themselves confronting the problem of writing the historical epic of the twentieth century, a project which had haunted modernism from its earliest beginnings. The initial response to this task, as has been noted, was to present the war as a psychological struggle as much as an ideological conflict.

The sudden second wave of war fiction, beginning with Heller's Catch-22, and Vonnegut's Mother Night in 1961, bears little resemblance to their first wave counterparts. The above novels present a radical new understanding of the events of World War II, and both are experimental in form. By 1961, sufficient time had passed for a reappraisal of America's recent history. H. Bruce Franklin, in his book War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination, notes that 1961 was also the year President Eisenhower warned of the dangers of the "military-industrial complex" (133). As American society moved away from the repressions of the McCarthyist era, it became possible for writers successfully to present more unorthodox versions of the war to a receptive audience. The increased US military presence in South-East Asia also led to a willingness to question the validity of military force as a means to achieve political and economic goals. The second wave of World War II novels raises questions regarding not only the war but also the character of post-war America. What new order of power had

emerged in the US during the Second World War? Whose America had won the war and at what cost? World War II became a point of origin, a gruesome theatre of war forming the matrix in which the military-industrial complex was cast.

The task of reappraising the war in a manner which either suspends, or actively questions, many ideological assumptions regarding the nature of American participation in the war remains a controversial endeavor. The process of questioning the war began with the second wave of war fiction and continues up until the present day. A case in point is the controversy that arose after the 1987 publication of Paul Fussell's Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in World War II. Fussell claims that few American and British soldiers fought on moral grounds, and that their cynicism towards the military reflected a widely held conviction that, in the words of a chapter heading from Wartime, "the real war will never get in the books." Fussell's strangely comic account of the average soldier's experience of the war stresses the humiliating kowtowing to superior officers, the fear of falling victim to a military blunder, and the general misery at bad food and ill-fitting clothes.

Simon Schama's unfavorable review of Wartime, in the New York Times Book Review presents a familiar accusation levelled at those who emplot the war outside the dictates of the "good war" narrative paradigm. This paradigm presents

the war as an almost allegorical struggle between good and evil, in which the forces of good (Allies) fight the forces of evil (Axis powers), for the purpose of establishing moral values. After disputing Fussell's claim that the majority of soldiers fought in an "ideological vacuum," on the grounds that such an "astounding conclusion" can only be reached "by treating the war entirely ahistorically," Schama reveals the root of his disagreement with Fussell (Schama 21). The dispute lies not in whether or not troops felt they were fighting a just war, but rather in what Schama sees as Fussell's lack of moral vision: "There is, then, a gaping moral sinkhole at the center of Wartime that, in the end, swallows up many of its interesting and sometimes brilliantly perceived observations" (21). Schama judges Fussell's moral culpability as stemming from his refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of not only the war itself, but also of the just war narrative as the only legitimate narrative model: "The notion that, for all its horrors, this might have been a just war strikes Mr. Fussell as sanctimonious" (21). Schama continues this line of thought in the following passage:

And since, according to Mr. Fussell, this war has no causes worth considering and no one can be held accountable for its outbreak, naturally its grim prosecution can be presented as meaningless slaughter.

All it takes, however, is the merest sidelong glance at the monstrous reality of the Third Reich, especially in its conduct as an occupying power, to raise an obvious question. Granted all the horrors of the war, what was the alternative? To allow Hitler to remain in undisturbed possession of Europe? To permit episodes like the

rape of Nanking to authorize a Japanese hegemony in Asia? But these elementary issues never seem to have occurred to Mr. Fussell. (Schama 21)

Schama implies that Fussell--who, as the dust-jacket blurb to Wartime informs us, was severely wounded during the war--has failed to consider the moral necessity of the war. In other words, Schama presents American interest in waging the war as solely moral. Schama's method of historical analysis, as implied by the above passage, is to reconstruct the balance of world power present immediately prior to American involvement. Once this reconstruction is complete, Schama then considers the moral courses of actions which the United States could take. However, Schama merely presumes that the motives for the United States' involvement were unquestionably moral. This is exactly the assumption which Fussell questions. Perhaps, from a moral vantage point, the only correct course of action was for the United States to fight the Axis powers. Yet this does not mean moral considerations necessarily served as the motive for going to war. Thus, the just war narrative is retroactive in its readiness to equate moral necessity with actual motives at work in the use of military force.

Consider, for example, the State Department's policy towards Mussolini and Hitler during the 1930s. In Deterring Democracy, Noam Chomsky argues that the origins of the Cold War lie as far back as the October Revolution. Rather than originating in the 1950s, a cold war of sorts was waged throughout the 1930s to the extent that the State Department

sought to support overseas governments resistant to the spread of socialism:

In the major academic study of the topic, David Schmitz points out that the model developed for Italy, with "moderate" Fascists holding the middle ground between the dreaded left- and right-wing extremists, was applied to Nazism as well. Here, Hitler was chosen as the representative of the moderates who promised "social order, anti-Bolshevik laws, and protection for foreign capital," Schmitz observes. The American charge d'affaires in Berlin wrote to Washington in 1933 that the hope for Germany lay in "the more moderate section of the [Nazi] party, headed by Hitler himself . . . which appeal[s] to all civilized and reasonable people," and seems to have "the upper hand" over the violent fringe. In 1937, the State Department saw Fascism as compatible with US economic interests. . . . Not until European Fascism attacked US interests did it become an avowed enemy. The reaction to Japanese Fascism was much the same. (Chomsky 41)

How would Schama account for State Department policy towards the Nazis in 1937? Clearly, the "just war" narrative ignores elementary questions regarding the influence United States' financial and economic interests played in the decision to go to war.

My intention here is not to champion Fussell or praise Chomsky so as to bury Schama, but rather to indicate differences between the types of narratives they employ to render the war comprehensible. The "just war" narrative functions by positing clearly defined nation states (the United States and Hitler's Germany) who are bound to collide and clash because of fundamental moral differences. In this way, war has all the characteristics of an allegorical contest between two combatants. Chomsky's account, however,



posits no such clear difference between the interests, at one time, of the State Department and that of the Nazis. In other words, the collective American 'we' of the just war narrative becomes fragmented into smaller diverse groups pursuing different policies. According to Chomsky, by 1933, State Department policy was favorable towards the Nazis. The reason for rejecting the "just war" narrative is not because one wishes, in Schama's words, to jump down "a gaping moral sinkhole," but rather because historical facts suggest a trail of diverse interests.

It is significant that Fussell's Wartime draws as heavily on literary texts, especially the war novel, as on historical sources, for the second wave World War II novel presents a pocket of resistance to the common remembrance of the war as a battle fought purely on moral grounds. Franklin suggests that developments in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in new approaches to America's recent past. Seen in this light, Heller, Vonnegut and Pynchon's works are attempts to make sense of the post-war period. These novels suggest an understanding of the war closer to that offered by Chomsky than Schama. However, unlike their World War I predecessors, for these novelists the task of remembering the war did not necessitate a rejection and condemnation of wartime propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

The treatment of propaganda in these novels is entirely different from that found in World War I novels. Dos Passos, Hemingway, and Cummings ridicule propaganda as a set

of rhetorical phrases and discursive practices which articulate nothing but dangerous lies. This critique of propaganda challenges a whole range of visual practices associated with the aesthetics of propaganda, such as the tourist gaze. Novels such as Cummings's The Enormous Room, and Dos Passos's Nineteen-Nineteen aim to teach the reader how to see the war in a radically different manner from the distorted perspective favored by propaganda. To combat the spectacle of war presented by pro-war fiction, the artist inverts a number of literary conventions. American World War I novels, along with European works such as Remarque's All Quiet On the Western Front, display a confident ability to separate propaganda's falsehoods from the truth of war.

Confidence in the ability to separate historical truth from propaganda becomes the target of Vonnegut's 1961 novel, Mother Night. The novel presents the memoirs of Howard W. Campbell, an American awaiting trial for war crimes who writes his memoirs while imprisoned in an Israeli jail. Campbell served the Nazi as a skilled propagandist, while also working as a double agent for the Americans. The entire war in Mother Night involves masquerade and subterfuge, as no major character in the novel is who he or she pretends to be. In his mock "Editor's Note" to the novel, Vonnegut justifies Campbell's actions on the grounds that the artist is always the teller of fantastic lies: "To say that he was a writer is to say that the demands of art alone were enough to make him lie, and to lie without seeing

any harm in it" (ix). Art demands that the writer lie, but art allows for the possibility that these lies are perhaps the highest form of truth: "And, now that I've said that about lying, I will risk the opinion that lies told for the sake of artistic effect . . . can be, in a higher sense, the most beguiling forms of truth" (ix).

As a propagandist, Campbell must be considered the epitome of the commercial hack. Just as Billy Pilgrim places great credence in the pulp novels of Kilgore Trout, Campbell's fictions are taken for truths by Dr. Jones, a failed dentist turned white supremacist. One of the novel's most ironic moments occurs when Jones informs Campbell that his admirers respect him "'For having the courage to tell the truth during the war . . . when everyone else was telling lies'" (MN 70). Although Jones intends this truth to refer to Campbell's anti-Semitic propaganda, the comment implies that the fictionality of all political rhetoric must be recognized as the war's final truth. A romantic figure, Campbell, like all other war survivors in the novel, rejects any notion of the war as just. For Campbell, all ideologies and all nations are basically fictions. When Helga asks him if he hates America, Campbell replies: "It's impossible for me to get emotional about it, because real estate doesn't interest me . . . I can't think in terms of boundaries. Those imaginary lines are as unreal to me as elves and pixies" (MN 103). We are only a few steps away here from Pynchon's Zone in Gravity's Rainbow. Mother Night implies

that no clear distinction can easily be made between art and propaganda.

What then happens to the spectacle of war in this second wave of war novels? In the case of World War I fiction, I have argued that the spectacle was central to the depiction of war and the challenging of certain conventions of travel fiction. In the second wave of World War II novels, the spectacle of war exceeds propaganda as a set of representational practices. The sense of war as spectacle involves more than just the shock of the numerous sights, grotesque and otherwise, that the war presents to an observer. In these novels, the spectacle occurs at the level of a perceived staging of conflict between two powers. The war is a spectacle not only because in an open display of force it catches the eye of the observer, but rather because it appears staged in a manner which implies that the conflict conceals an order of power not immediately apparent to the observer.

The spectacle is hence indivisible from the rejection of conventional wisdom which views American involvement in War World II as motivated by purely moral interests. For if the war can no longer simply be considered a struggle between absolute good and evil, or between two clearly opposed ideologies, then war poses something of an interpretative dilemma. Like the ambiguous figure of Campbell in his cell, the entire war awaits trial. The public, however, might not be in a position to know the true

network of deals and interests which form the tangled web of the war. As Campbell had made a secret deal with American Intelligence to transmit coded messages, his broadcasts were a ruse which veiled the transmission of information. Only the disclosure by Frank Wiraten, the agent who recruited Campbell in Germany to work for American intelligence, would allow the court to reach a just verdict. We can view the difficulties in judging Campbell as symbolic of the problem encountered in emplotting the war outside of the "just war" narrative. How can we trust the apparent antagonism between each side? What deals have been struck between each side and to what ends?

Once the notion of American participation in World War II as motivated solely by moral considerations is discarded, the possibility that the war serves other purposes must be considered. One such purpose is that the conflict might be entirely staged, a spectacular show which appears to be a conflict between hostile antagonists, but which nevertheless operates according to mutually agreed rules, in order to serve the mutual interests of either side, or the desires of an unknown third party. The spectacle of war refers to the illusionary quality of the conflict, that is, the extent to which the opposing sides of war have mutual interests which are hidden by current hostilities.

#### Catch-22

The tents of the enlisted men in the squadron stood on the other side of the road alongside the

open-air movie theatre in which, for the daily amusement of the dying, ignorant armies clashed by night on a collapsible screen, and to which another U.S.O. troupe came that same afternoon. Joseph Heller Catch-22 (26-27)

Catch-22 marks a innovative break with the tradition of the American war novel. Heller rejects both the naturalism of Mailer's The Naked And The Dead and the modernist Impressionism of Hemingway, Dos Passos and Cummings. The realism of The Naked And the Dead limits Mailer's treatment of the relationship between war and film, in that Mailer only permits himself to consider this relationship in terms of the thoughts and reflections of his characters. We are told that for Hennessey, an air raid by a Zero on his ship "had all been very different from the combat he had previously seen, without heat, without fatigue, beautiful and unreal like a color movie or a calendar picture" (N&D 13). As the company faces a mortar attack from the Japanese on the island, Hennessey reflects that "This was like a movie" (N&D 36). Mailer's treatment of film is similar to that of Dos Passos in Three Soldiers as Hennessey, like Fusseli, evaluates his experience in terms of what he has seen at the movies. Indeed, Mailer does employ certain cinematic techniques for narrative ends. In particular, the flashback devices of the "Time Machine" sections are narrated in a manner that suggests that we might be watching a film of each character's past. For Hennessey war might resemble film, but such a resemblance only has value as a personal association.

Mailer's naturalism, which has its origins in the work of Crane and Norris, presents war as a struggle of male wills against the hostile world of nature, women, and other men. The quotation from Nietzsche which opens Part Three of the novel, titled "Plant and Phantom," states: "Even the wisest among you is only a disharmony and hybrid of plant and phantom. But do I bid you become phantoms and plants?" (N&D 431) Mailer initially intended the novel to be called "Plant and Phantom," and this title indicates the degree to which Mailer proposes war as a natural component of human life. Each character must either assert his will against a hostile, indifferent environment or suffer death. In such a world, war occurs as a conflict of wills between individuals, just as animals in the wild compete for limited resources. To successfully engage in combat a soldier must revert back to a pre-civilized animal state; he needs--to borrow a phrase from Deleuze and Guattari--to "become animal."<sup>2</sup> Croft, after ruthlessly arranging Hearn's death, reverts to a state of almost pure barbarism as he leads his men up the face of the mountain. Hearn's liberal philosophy can neither acknowledge nor defeat Croft's animal power because it fails to recognize the forces of becoming animal which are unleashed in wartime.

I have mentioned The Naked and the Dead because Catch-22 actively challenges a number of dangerous assumptions in Mailer's novel. For Mailer, the attraction of war lies in the release it offers from the restraints

society imposes on base instinct; in Freudian terms war allows for an unleashing of the id from the restraints of the superego. Mailer suggests that World War II, in the microcosm of the battle for the Pacific Island of Anopopei, offers a chance for pure unmediated experience in which individual will, as an expression of being, struggles against the forces that would subdue its power. Despite the long conversations in which Hearn debates the merits of liberalism against the fascistic philosophy of General Cummings, the real politics of the novel lie in this assertion of being against non-being. Finally, the unmediated, pure animal power of Croft ensures the death of the intellectual Hearn as instinct triumphs over reason. Moreover, this murder occurs in the natural setting of a pristine island which, in the eyes of Ridges--one of the novel's numerous minor characters--"looked like the Garden of Eden" (N&D 97). Anopopei is a prelapsarian world where in the battle between reason and instinct, phantom (as ideal spirit) and plant (base material), the instinctual emerges as victor.

Heller's rejection of naturalism indicates a refusal to accept both the inevitability of war and the notion that war offers the opportunity for unmediated experience. Like The Naked and the Dead, Heller's Catch-22 is set on an island, although after presenting a detailed geographical location for Pianosa island, "eight miles south of Elba," in a gesture typical of the undercutting style of the narrative



which refutes statements immediately after they are made, the introductory note quips that "(l)ike the setting of this novel, the characters, too, are fictitious" (Heller 5). Whereas the Modern Library edition of The Naked and the Dead presents the reader with a map of Anopopei Island, complete with arrows indicating the "Invasion Beach" and the "Airfield," Heller provides a geographical location only to announce in the same breath the fictional quality of Pianosa. Heller's note on Pianosa frames the narrative in a fashion similar to the opening line of Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five; "All of this happened, more or less" (Sl-5 1). The post-modernist war novel rejects naturalism by offering its own narrative construction of the war as fiction. Linda Hutcheon suggests that the prevalence of parody within post-modernist fiction indicates a new awareness of the textuality of history; as we can only know the past through textualized remains, our knowledge of that past must be dependent on how various discourses emplot these remains to construct a narrative. Parody recognizes--perhaps even celebrates--the textual flavor of the past: "To parody is not to destroy the past: in fact, to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it. And this is the postmodern paradox" (Hutcheon 6). The parodic style of Catch-22 heightens the absurd, fictional character of the war while remaining within a world which is recognizable as our own.

In Catch-22 war is comprised of staged, artificial realities which take precedence over real life. In direct contrast to The Naked and the Dead, Catch-22 suggests that rather than offering pure, unmediated experience, World War II consists of staged events in which the spectacular begins to dominate the real. Furthermore, when the real is encountered, the experience precipitates a trauma that shocks Yossarian into a new recognition of the configurations of power at work in the war. Croft responds to war by regressing to a pre-social state of being that is characterized as aggressive and psychopathic. Yossarian's response is a new recognition of the complicity of his own desires with the construction of the spectacle.

### Staging and Military Power

When we consider Heller's depiction of military power in the novel, it is apparent that the generals and officers are perversely obsessed with appearance rather than reality. The military bureaucracy only acknowledges what is written as real; any reality which contradicts official documents must be considered invalid. There are numerous instances of this in the novel: the dead man in Yossarian's tent who officially never arrived, Doc Daneeka being denied food and pay because he is officially dead, and so forth. The concern with appearance extends beyond written language to encompass the spectacle in which events are staged for the sole purpose of being observed. Lieutenant Schiesskopf's

burning ambition is to win every parade. To increase the precision of marches, he devises a scheme to connect, with thin copper wire, the wrist of each marching soldier to a nickel alloy peg inserted in the thighbone. The prize for winning these parades is a worthless pennant on a long pole. For Schiesskopf, soldiers are toys whose bodies have no intrinsic value other than their capacity to be transformed into efficient marching machines. The entire war involves winning meaningless parades. Schiesskopf's wife--who is having an affair with Yossarian--pleads for sexual attention, only to be reproached with the retort "Don't you know there's a parade going on?" (74).

Schiesskopf's views are shared by General Peckem, who recommends that men be sent "into combat in full-dress uniform so they'll make a good impression on the enemy when they're shot down" (224). The higher echelons of the military, then, are principally concerned with staging events, rather than winning battles, and their roles are defined as observers and manipulators. Aside from commenting on the indifference shown by organized bureaucracies towards individuals, and the absurd doublethink that characterizes these institutions, the novel associates military power with staging. To be in power is to be a director or stager of events for one's own pleasure and amusement.

The episode in which Schiesskopf plans a parade while his wife demands sexual attention raises a number of

questions regarding the relationships among power, pleasure, and the war. How are we to understand the politics of the gaze in Catch-22? Is the relationship between observer and spectacle central to the novel's parodic understanding of the war? At this point, Foucault's Discipline And Punish appears to offer an attractive theoretical apparatus for teasing out relations of power and observation in the novel. If we take as our point of departure Foucault's claim that "discipline produces subjected and practised bodies" (Discipline 138) while recalling that Foucault defines discipline as "a political anatomy of detail" (Discipline 139), then our reading follows a line of thought which suggests that World War II ensures a proliferation of practices which serve to discipline and regulate the motion of bodies. Such a reading would perhaps lead us to conclude that the rise of military and organizational power entails the subjugation of the body to regulatory practices which are monitored not by punishment but by the panopticon. Susan Sontag concisely defines the fascistic characteristics of the military aesthetic when she notes that in totalitarian societies, "The masses are made to take form, be design" (92). For Sontag "mass athletic demonstrations, a choreographed display of bodies . . . evokes recurrent features of fascist aesthetics; the holding in or confining of force; military precision" (92). To be a stager of military parades is by this definition to adhere to an essentially fascistic aesthetics of the body in motion.

Yet such a reading could be performed only at the cost of ignoring Schiesskopf's rejection of his wife's advances so as to plan his parade. To interpret the gaze as simply a surveillance mechanism is to ignore any erotic investment in the act of staging and observing. While disciplining the body evokes a fascistic aesthetics, in Catch-22 the enjoyment of this aesthetic involves a particular economy of desire as well as a politics of spectatorship. In refusing his wife's sexual advances, Schiesskopf, like all the directors of the war, displays an almost fetishistic concern with objects. In terms of the novel his desire is perverse, not because of its potentially homoerotic content (in which the soldiers occupy a feminine position as figures to be looked at), but rather because Schiesskopf, like Cathcart, favors the object or representation over the real. This perversion is dangerous and destructive as it disinvests the physical body of any erotic content as desire is sublimated into rules, parades and aerial photographs.

While Catch-22 represents women in terms of a male gaze which defines them as, to use Laura Mulvey's phrase, "erotic spectacle[s]," Heller's treatment of the gaze extends beyond an uncritical depiction of woman as sexual objects.<sup>3</sup> This is not to deny that for the greater part of the novel women are unquestionably defined purely in terms of their relationships with men. In keeping with their perversions, the officers only desire women for the sake of either impressing or manipulating other officers. There are

numerous examples of this in the novel: Captain Black solicits Nately's whore "just so he could torment Nately" (166) and "watch Nately eat his liver as he related the atrocious indignities to which he had forced her to submit" (166). Colonel Cathcart keeps a lavish house in which he intends to throw wild, outrageous orgies, but as General Dreedle and General Peckem show no interest in these orgies Cathcart "was certainly not going to waste his time and energy making love to beautiful women unless there was something in it for him" (216).

The most sustained treatment of this theme occurs in the moaning scene of Chapter 21. General Dreedle is accompanied at all times by Colonel Moodus and a beautiful nurse dressed in a tight uniform who "drove everyone crazy but General Dreedle" (221). Dreedle's pleasure derives not from ogling the nurse but from watching Moodus suffer with desire for her. In a motif which structures the entire chapter, Dreedle chortles that if he catches Moodus "putting a hand on her or any other woman" he'll "bust the horny bastard right down to private and put him on K. P. for a year" (222). As Major Danby, accompanied by General Dreedle and the nurse, begins to brief the squadron on the Avignon mission, Yossarian's eyes become fixed upon the nurse:

He sat gazing in clammy want at her full red lips and dimpled cheeks as he listened to Major Danby describe in a monotonous, didactic male drone the heavy concentration of flak awaiting them at Avignon. (225)

Slowly, Yossarian begins to moan with longing for the nurse and this moaning is taken up by the other men in the briefing room. Dreedle orders the men to be quiet and when Danby lets loose a moan of displeasure at the prospect of having to repeat his speech, Dreedle orders that he be taken out and shot. The scene turns once more to the tension between Colonel Moodus and Dreedle, as Moodus--who addresses Dreedle as 'Dad,' reinforcing our sense of Dreedle as an authoritarian father figure--informs Dreedle that he does not have the power to execute Danby.

For Yossarian, women offer an escape from the war. They represent for him all the joys of living that death would take from him. Yossarian moans in recognition of the possibility of his own death over Avignon: "he moaned in deep despair suddenly at the thought that he might never again see this lovely woman to whom he had never spoken a word and whom he now loved so pathetically" (225). I want to argue here that rather than simply rejecting Heller's stereotypical depiction of women in the novel, we should recognize that the novel acknowledges that these representations are structured by a commanding male gaze which, by investing the figure of woman with erotic qualities, seeks to escape the greater perversity of the war. Yossarian's gaze is his line of escape; he blots out the drone of the war by idolizing the nurse before him.

We are close to understanding the relationship between the idolatry of women and the spectacle of war when we

recognize the paradox of Yossarian's misrecognition of the politics of his own desire. Yossarian, in his pursuit of women as a relief from the war, fails to recognize that the entire war serves to offer women as sexually exploited avenues of escape. Yossarian's liaisons with prostitutes are a typical part of military life. Stephen Sniderman has commented on how Yossarian undergoes moral growth during the course of the novel.<sup>4</sup> While Sniderman pays little attention to male/female relationships in the novel, I will argue that this development occurs as a result of Yossarian's recognition of the complicity between his own desires and the war's brutality; he can no longer totally separate himself from the generals but must learn to accept, as well as to avoid, his complicity.

A question that arises towards the end of Catch-22 concerns the appearance of Natelly's whore as an assassin obsessed with killing Yossarian. Why does she want to kill him, given that Yossarian is only credited in the novel with accidentally breaking Natelly's nose? After noting that Yossarian swears to her that "I didn't kill him" (Heller 403), Stephen Sniderman declares:

The only possibility is that Natelly's whore knows intuitively what Yossarian has not yet learned, that he is to blame for Natelly's death, not in an impersonal way, but in a way that justifies her behavior toward him personally. (Nagel 36)

Sniderman proposes feminine intuition as the source of Natelly's whore's knowledge. Yet Sniderman can only advance



this reading by rejecting the explanation offered by the novel for Nately's whore's actions:

Yossarian thought he knew why Nately's whore held him responsible for Nately's death and wanted to kill him. Why the hell shouldn't she? It was a man's world, and she and everyone younger had every right to blame him and everyone older for every unnatural tragedy that befell them. . . . (Heller 414)

Rather than, as Sniderman does, reading this explanation as inadequate, I want to take Yossarian's explanation on its own terms. In Chapter 33 entitled "Nately's Whore," the woman--who is known only by this appellation--is being held captive in a hotel by "middle-aged military big shots" (361) until she says the word "uncle." Although she frequently repeats the word, in typical Catch-22 fashion the generals explain to her that "We can't really make you say uncle unless you don't want to say uncle" (361). The generals seek to humiliate her and while Yossarian and his friends crash the hotel room with the intent of rescuing her, Yossarian "propped her against the door jamb with both hands on her hips and wormed himself against her lasciviously until Nately seized him by the arm" (362).

Without a name of her own, defined purely in terms of the man who buys her (while seeking to legitimate his ownership with offers of marriage), Nately's whore rebounds back on the male symbolic order with a vengeance. Yossarian accepts both her motives and her actions; the question for him is not why should she kill him but rather why shouldn't she want to see him, as a representative of the 'man's

world,' finally dead? The distinction Yossarian makes between the young and the old reappears once again in the Rome chapter, where Yossarian, in his search for Natelly's whore's kid sister, finds that under the auspices of the ubiquitous Catch-22, all the young girls have been chased away by soldiers and policemen with clubs. In fact, Catch-22 functions as an incontrovertible law which allows for the exercise of brute force:

Catch-22 did not exist, he was positive of that, but it made no difference. What did matter was that everyone thought it existed, and that was much worse, for there was no object or text to ridicule or refute, to accuse, criticize, attack, amend, hate, revile, spit at, rip to shreds, trample upon or burn up. (Heller 418)

Catch-22 is the law of the law, the law which extends its power in its own name. I am tempted here to equate Catch-22 with either the Lacanian phallus, or Derrida's notion of a transcendental signified, since like Heller's law both function as absent centres which anchor the endless sliding of signifiers. Both are postulated as the law of the law which cannot be written yet supposedly secures language. However, I will offer a more mundane, but equally valid conclusion; namely, Catch-22 as the logic of the war itself, the accumulation of power--outside of narratives of legitimation--which permits the hassling of young women in the street.

While Yossarian searches for Natelly's whore's twelve year old sister so as to ensure her safety, he fails to recognize the complicity of his own desire for women with

the chaos which surrounds him. After realizing that "mobs with clubs were in control everywhere" (426), Yossarian falls back to his old pattern of finding any woman in order to shut out the war. Yet "[t]he girls were all gone" (426) and Yossarian acknowledges the grim possibility that many are probably dead. The only woman left is the unattractive Michaela, with "sallow skin and myopic eyes" (427), whom none of the men have slept with except Aarfy "who had raped her once that same evening and had held her prisoner in a clothes closet for almost two hours with his hand over her mouth" (427). Yossarian confronts the final cost of his desire when he sees, to his horror, that Aarfy has killed Michaela by throwing her out of the window. Aarfy feels no remorse; after all, he argues, she is only a whore and no policeman would be interested in her murder.

Although Yossarian pleads with Aarfy to regret his crime, the narrative connects Yossarian with this murder in two ways. First, as previously mentioned, Yossarian, as a last resort, searches for Michaela so as to sleep with her and it is with this in mind that he confronts "the pitiful, ominous, gory spectacle of the broken corpse" (427). Second, while Yossarian informs Aarfy that he will be arrested and hung for this crime, when the police arrive they arrest Yossarian for being AWOL. The male gaze transforms woman into a disposable object onto which desire is projected. Michaela's corpse appears as the spectacle of a male desire which finds no value in the body after

satiation. Yossarian finally recognizes his complicity with catch-22 and the war itself, and this recognition allows him to accept the vengeance sought by Natelly's whore. His consideration of the deal offered by Colonel Korn and Cathcart displays a new sensibility regarding his affinity with, rather than difference from, the officers. By the end of the novel the tables are turned. Rather than finding escape in women, Yossarian must now flee from Natelly's whore who pursues him as a signifier of oppressive male desire.

#### Faciality, Popular Memory and Milo's Cartel

How is the presentation of war as spectacle in the novel connected to Yossarian's recognition of the politics of the gaze? The war finally serves to drive the young women from the streets. Adrienne Rich suggests that "rape is a part of war; but it may be more accurate to say that the capacity for dehumanizing another which so corrodes male sexuality is carried over from sex into war" (114-5). Perhaps Catch-22 finally agrees with Rich's analysis. This capacity for dehumanization resides in a variety of practices of looking: woman as erotic object, women as promise of escape, etc. These practices extend beyond the construction of the female body as erotic spectacle. The entire war in Catch-22 is a perverse theatre, a matter of parades and aerial photographs, staged for generals for their own benefit. The Mediterranean theatre pits General Peckem against Dreedle as much as Allied forces against the

enemy. Colonel Catchcart continually raises the number of bombing missions in the vain hope that his photograph will be placed in The Saturday Evening Post.

Major ---- de Coverley, who ends the stupidity of Captain Black's loyalty oath crusade, displays an astute understanding of war as spectacle. His military brilliance lies in his ability to master the photograph. An enigmatic figure to both German and Allied Intelligence, on hearing that a city is about to fall into Allied hands Major ---- de Coverley packs his bags and flies to the city, "accomplishing all this without uttering a word, by the sheer force of his solemn, domineering visage and the peremptory gestures of his wrinkled finger" (135). A few days after the fall of an occupied city into Allied hands

newspapers would appear throughout the world with photographs of the first American soldiers bludgeoning their way into the shattered city through rubble and smoke. Inevitably, Major ---- de Coverley was among them, seated straight as a ramrod in a jeep he had obtained from somewhere, glancing neither right nor left as the artillery fire burst about his invincible head and lithe young infantrymen with carbines went loping up along the sidewalks in the shelter of burning buildings or fell dead in doorways. He seemed eternally indestructible as he sat there surrounded by danger, his features molded firmly into that same fierce, regal, just and forbidding countenance which was recognized and revered by every man in the squadron. (134-5)

More than any other figure in Catch-22, Major ---- de Coverley recognizes and exploits the cinematic quality of history. The Major's power comes not so much from his military rank as from his ability to become a living icon.

Whereas Peckem's skill lies in his verbosity, Major ---- de Coverley's command lies in his countenance. He possesses a mastery of the facial codes of power that men recognize and admire. His stare, which refuses to be distracted by the action of the battle tableau he commands, is primarily the gaze of the director as he directs his cast.

In terms of the definitions of the spectacle established in Chapter 1 of this dissertation, the Major's appeal lies in his exploitation of the public's sense of war as a spectacular display. Major ---- de Coverley's iconic appeal resides in the photogenic quality of his face--a quality which appeals to the popular view of history as the deeds of great men. Whereas Cathcart attempts to win prestige by breaking the record number of bombing missions performed by his men, Major ---- de Coverley masters the media by appealing to the camera. Cathcart hopes to achieve a record that would be considered a newsworthy event, while Major ---- de Coverley understands that kudos lies in a mastery of the media's framing or construction of an event.

This difference of approach suggests two incompatible notions of news: on the one hand news as the recording of important events, on the other, news as a set of signifying practices which can be exploited for certain effects. As war news becomes history, Major ---- de Coverley can expect a more durable place in the history books (especially popular photo-histories such as the Time Life series of books on World War II) than Colonel Cathcart. Heller

describes the Major as a veritable Jehovah: "Major ---- de Coverley was a splendid, awe-inspiring, grave old man with a massive leonine head and an angry shock of wild white hair that raged like a blizzard around his stern, patriarchal face" (135). I am reminded of Michaelangelo's painting on the Sistine Chapel ceiling of God creating Adam. Like Yahweh, the Major's true name cannot be written but must be designated by a blank. The capture of cities becomes an expression of patriarchal will as the Major--Jehovah expressing his will through the unfolding of history--commands the battle.

The popular sense of history, then, must be considered iconographic. Through the character of Major ---- de Coverley, Heller offers numerous insights into the process by which an event enters popular memory. The conventions of newspaper photography demand a spectacle and so reality is staged so as to answer this unwritten demand. I will return to a more thorough examination of the relation between iconography and popular memory in the section of this chapter devoted to Gravity's Rainbow. Suffice it to say that Gravity's Rainbow extends and elaborates a number of the concerns of Catch-22. Both Heller and Pynchon consider iconographic representations of war as constructs which veil more entangled networks of political, economic, and psychological investments at work in wartime. To remember the European theatre as a contest between Roosevelt, Churchill, Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin is only a partial

truth, a particular emplotment of history that closes off other narrative possibilities. In such a narrative, the war is remembered as merely a battle between great male leaders who directed their armies to determine the solitary victor. The appeal of war photographs such as those depicting a triumphant major driving into a captured city lies in the sense of narrative order they provide the war. According to the unwritten conventions of such a narrative, at each liberation of an allied city there should be a commanding figure directing his forces onwards against all odds. Major ---- de Coverley's skill lies in his aptitude for knowing how to appear as the necessary icon required by this narrative construction.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari name the iconic power of the face "faciality" (visageité). For Deleuze and Guattari, "[t]he face is a politics" (181) in that the type of face we see before us determines the conditions of signification: "Faces are not basically individual; they define zones of frequency or probability, delimit a field that neutralizes in advance any expressions or connections unamenable to the appropriate significations" (168). They suggest that a face itself exists only as an assemblage of an "abstract machine" designated as the "white wall/black hole" system which produces, through the play of light and shadow, the appearance of a face (167). The face cannot be considered limited to the head, as objects and landscapes may themselves appear face-like due to the assemblage of



elements produced by the abstract machine. To appreciate how political power operates through the face of a leader, as well as the "power of film operating through the face of the star" (175), requires an acknowledgement of the coupling of social power with faciality:

We are certainly not saying that the face, the power of the face (la puissance du visage), engenders and explains social power (pouvoir). Certain assemblages of power (pouvoir) require the production of a face, others do not. (175)

Following this line of Deleuze and Guattari's thought, I offer this formulation: total war as an assemblage of power requires the icon of the face. The concentration of power necessary to wage a total war requires the iconic face of the leader, a face presented to standing armies and civilians alike as a spectacular monument of national unity and collective will.

The face, then, is a politics. The shot of Major ---- de Coverley, leading his forces into battle, is constructed according to the conventions of war photography. He appeals to the camera as the most photogenic major for the simple reason that his face corresponds to the popular notion of what a conquering major should look like. Moreover, he also talks like a conquering major. A man of few words, the Major ends the excessives of Captain Black's loyalty oath campaign with his inarticulate but effective call to "Gimme eat" (Heller 120). Power resides not merely in the absurd bureaucracies of the generals, nor solely in Milo's international cartel, but also in the photogenic face which,

in the eyes of the camera, has all the traits of a signifier of power. The liberation of a city, as captured by wartime photographers, will be inseparable from the figure of Major ---- de Coverley leading his forces. Yet the tableau formed by the Major and his troops is staged. The Major arrives in the city days before the liberation with the sole purpose of staging the spectacle so as to enhance his own fame.

The facial icon of a national leader may conceal complex alliances of interests served by the war. Although war appears to require a strict binary polarization of identities ('us' against 'them'), this polarization only veils the more complex interests of cartels who stage the war for their own profit and hold only provisional allegiance to the state. A paranoid vision of history rejects the legitimacy of all leaders to represent their nations. Both Heller's and Pynchon's war novels are paranoid in that they call upon the reader to abandon accepted histories of World War II and to consider instead those cartels who simultaneously profited from both sides of the war. These cartels know how to employ media and political rhetoric to their own advantage. From a paranoid perspective, the adversarial character of war may itself be staged. Entire campaigns and theatres of war may only serve to provide the war with a sheen of reality which disguises other undisclosed agents at work.

In Catch-22, Milo forms the M & M Enterprises syndicate adding an ampersand to the syndicate logo so as "to nullify

any impression that the syndicate was a one-man operation" (259). As Milo's enterprise expands he readily begins to trade with the Germans who provide him bombers so as to allow him to fly supply runs. At one point, Milo chastises Colonels Cathcart and Korn for the suggestion that they might confiscate the planes because the United States was at war with Germany. Milo reasons that the planes belong to the syndicate and subsequently orders his mechanics to paint over the German swastikas and stencil, in their place, his own logo. "Right before their eyes," we are told, "he had transformed his syndicate into an international cartel" (260).

Epitomizing free enterprise, Milo's actions are motivated by a love of profit rather than any nationalist sentiments. He directs his cartel so as to stage the war for his own benefit. In the manner of an international corporation, Milo's cartel crosses the boundaries of each side of the war. He arranges a deal with the American military to bomb the German-held bridge at Orvieto while sealing a contract with the Germans to defend the same bridge. In a convoluted series of deals, a battle which on first appearance appears to be fought between American and Germans forces actually fills the coffers of an absent third party whose interests are served by each side. While the cartel did not create the military, Milo exploits the logic of war for his own ends.

Yossarian, however, is not happy with the Orvieto deal, as the dead man in his tent was killed over Orvieto the day he arrived. He confronts Milo outside the open-air movie theatre with the accusation that Milo must take responsibility for the death of the unknown corpse in Yossarian's tent. Milo denies all responsibility, arguing that he is only trying to run the war in a business-like fashion. When Yossarian retorts that Milo is wrong to make deals with the enemy, Milo declares that "the Germans are not our enemies" (Heller 262). He sees himself as neither friend nor enemy of the Germans, as the only enemy for Milo is a financial loss on a bad business deal. He explains to Yossarian that he's only trying to run the war on a business-like basis and that the Germans are not without their merits: "Maybe they did start the war, and maybe they are killing millions of people, but they pay their bills a lot more promptly than some allies of ours I could name" (263). Following the success of the Orvieto bridge deal, Milo signs a contract to bomb his own squadron. Everyone is appalled by this action until Milo opens the books to his cartel and declares that he has made an enormous profit.

The question of who profits from war threatens to disrupt the simplistic dichotomy between enemy and ally which propaganda and political rhetoric aims to establish. War remains an activity practiced by the state, whereas cartels and companies primarily exist to make a profit. The question as to who, outside the state, profits from war

invites paranoid speculation. Milo's bombing of his own squadron implies that war might be staged to appear adversarial, as the desire for profit blurs the distinction between friend and enemy. What might be forgotten in popular memory is the extent to which profit shaped the course of the war.

Heller has frequently maintained that Catch-22 should be considered a peacetime fiction, rather than simply a war novel.<sup>5</sup> Milo represents not only the new free enterprise spirit of the post-war period, but also the emergence of this ethos during wartime. In an often quoted interview from 1975, Heller drew explicit connections between Milo and contemporary corporate figures:

when Milo Minderbinder says 'what's good for Milo Minderbinder is good for the country', he's paraphrasing Charles E. Wilson, the former head of General Motors, who told a Senate committee, what is good for the country is good for General Motors, and vice versa. (Quoted in Seed 66)

Milo's rhetoric shows the rising power of corporate interests that readily conflate the national good with their own profits. Catch-22 reflects a concern with the growing corporatization of everyday life expressed in the 1950s in films such as The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit (1956) and books such as William Whyte's The Organization Man. Despite actions such as the bombing of his own squadron, Wayne Charles Miller notes that

Milo is not an insidious and conniving power-hungry fascist. In fact, it is testament to Heller's genius that he could create a figure simultaneously so innocent and so destructive as

his representative of American business values and perhaps capitalism itself. (Quoted in Nagel 85)

Milo's ethos favors private profit (in the illusory guise of collective ownership represented by Milo's claim "that everyone has a share" in his syndicate) over national interest. Leon Seltzer suggests that Milo's syndicate is "basically antagonistic toward his country, and that loyalty to private enterprise and loyalty to one's government are irresistibly opposed" (Nagel 79). What emerges during the war is an ethos and organization that employs the rhetoric of nationalism for aims that are actually hostile to the preservation of the nation-state. Like Pynchon, Heller indicates that rather than nations appearing victorious at the end of the war, the multinational cartel arises as a dominant power.

Heller's absurd treatment of Milo foregrounds the relationship between cartels and popular memory. We are informed that Milo is not only the mayor of Palermo, but also the Caliph of Baghdad, the Imam of Damascus, and in certain regions worshipped as the god of rain and corn. Milo is a metaphor for all the connections between separate interests which elude a narrative history of war that concentrates on dynamic individuals and decisive battles. When Yossarian, Milo and Orr arrive in Palermo, they find the streets crammed with cheering crowds gathered beneath banners depicting Milo's face:

Milo had posed for these pictures in a drab peasant's blouse with a high round collar, and his scrupulous, paternal countenance was tolerant,

wise, critical and strong as he stared out at the populace omnisciently with his undisciplined mustache and disunited eyes. (Heller 240)

Milo's photograph presents him as a man of the people content to dress in a peasant's blouse. While he appears paternal and alert, his face itself betrays human imperfection with his unruly mustache. By magnifying the appeal of Milo, Heller hints at the motives at work in a population's support of its leader as well as the interchangeable character of heads of government. Regardless of national boundaries, all leaders are (if I may be excused the neologism) milotarists in that the international economy in which they trade provides the basis of their real support. The crowd adores Milo for the wealth and abundance he brings them, much as tribes worship his effigy for a bountiful crop.

The above passage brings to light a crucial difference between Gravity's Rainbow and Catch-22. In Pynchon's work, the cartel eludes all faciality. We rarely see the faces of those who control and direct the war for their own ends. Heller, however, bestows upon Milo an iconic faciality entirely absent in our common history of the war. The excessive abundance of images of Milo in the towns Yossarian and Orr visit points to the absence of any such figure as Milo in our own popular histories. The disclosure--and subsequent pardon when Milo proves a profit--of the bombing of the squadron only reminds us of the lack of any such blatant disclosures of profit. While corporations such as

General Motors clearly profited from the war by supplying both German and Allied forces, their activities were essentially faceless.<sup>6</sup> Both Pynchon and Heller address the facelessness of profit in two entirely different ways. Heller provides profit with an ubiquitous faciality which extends to effigies of the corn god, whereas Pynchon's conspiratorial cartels remain faceless.

### Catch-22 as Hyperreal War

The war in Catch-22 is cinematic as both photography and cinema are not simply means of representing events; they constitute part of the reality of the events staged for them. General Peckem demands that his squadrons drop their bombs so as to form a tight "bomb pattern," a term he "dreamed up" which "means nothing" (334). Peckem orders the destruction, by bombing, of a harmless Italian village. The villagers are not to be informed by a leaflet drop that they should evacuate their homes. When Yossarian and Dunbar question the mission, they are told by Colonel Korn that the rubble from decimated buildings will form an effective roadblock. However, when they question the strategic value of this roadblock, Korn admits that the mission's objective is not to hinder enemy transportation but to produce a tight bombing pattern. Colonel Cathcart, hoping to win favor with General Peckem, wants "a good clean aerial photograph he won't be ashamed to send through the channels" (337).



Dunbar refuses to fulfill the mission and deliberately discharges the bombs miles from the village.

H. Bruce Franklin describes how in the novel "the sole purpose of the American annihilation of the undefended Italian village is to produce publicity photos of tight bomb patterns" (125). For Franklin, the episode demonstrates Heller's questioning of the legitimacy and necessity of American bombing during World War II. Yet the episode also questions the wartime role of photography by suggesting how film comes to dominate the practice of war. The domination of film transforms war into the staging of spectacles for the sake of producing a photograph or film. Yossarian and Dunbar object to flying a raid so as to obtain a photograph. They object to Cathcart's instructions that they treat the village as a movie set that must be destroyed for the sake of an image. Heller's sense of film's role in the war extends beyond movies as an entertainment for the troops as his characters find themselves in a war that stages events for film.

For Baudrillard, simulation is the order of the post-modernist day: "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (2). Both the planned bombing strike against the village and Major --- de Coverley's triumphant entrance are instances of hyperreality. In light of Baudrillard's formulation of the hyperreal, Heller's treatment of film

poses a question: Namely, do Heller's characters inhabit a hyperreal world fighting a hyperreal war? Furthermore, what are the implications of considering World War II a hyperreal war? Baudrillard acknowledges that his formulation of the precession of simulacra cannot be presented without due consideration of what such a theory might imply for the study of warfare. In Simulations, Baudrillard considers the aerial bombardment of Hanoi and asks us to recognize that "[t]he intolerable nature of this bombing should not conceal the fact that it was only a simulacrum" (68) as the outcome of the war was already determined and so "nothing was at stake but the credibility of the final montage" (Baudrillard 69). Baudrillard's choice of the word 'montage' implies that in its final stages the Vietnam War approximated the condition of cinema.

Obviously, the Vietnam War and World War II were entirely different wars. Baudrillard argues that the bombing of Hanoi was a simulacrum because the outcome of the war had already been determined. However, in comparison to Baudrillard's notion of simulation, Heller's novel implies that the desire for simulation involves questions of gender and male sexuality. As we have seen, Catch-22 constantly associates simulation and staging with male military power that finds pleasure in the manipulation of disciplined bodies.

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that in Catch-22 and Gravity's Rainbow the protagonist takes on the

role of a detective. Rather than performing heroic acts, in each novel the protagonist's task is to make coherent sense out of the war that surrounds him. Both Slothrop and Yossarian can be compared to Tannhäuser--with whom Pynchon explicitly associates Slothrop--in that they become distracted from their quests by sensual desires. In Catch-22, Clevinger asks for questions at the end of an educational session on the war conducted by himself and an unnamed corporal. Yossarian asks "the question that had no answer" (35), namely, "'Where are the Snowdens of yesteryear?'" (35). This is the first mention of Snowden in the novel, and we are told that Yossarian "was ready to pursue him [the corporal] through all the words in the world to wring the knowledge from him if he could" (36). For all of the novel's bewildering narrative structure, the action insistently returns to Yossarian's futile attempt to keep Snowden alive during the Avignon mission. This episode forms the kernel of Catch-22; it is the core around which the entire narrative circulates and to which the reader returns to learn progressively the details of Snowden's death.

I mention Yossarian's--and the novel's--insistent return to Snowden's death because this return inscribes a crucial difference between Catch-22's approach to the hyperreal character of war and that offered by Baudrillard. Baudrillard acknowledges that hyperreal wars, for all their

hyperreality, nevertheless bring about real death and real human misery:

Moralists about war, champions of war's exalted values should not be greatly upset: a war is not any the less heinous for being a mere simulacrum--the flesh suffers just the same, and the dead ex-combatants count as much there as in other wars. That objective is always amply accomplished, like that of the partitioning of territories and of disciplinary sociality. What no longer exists is the adversity of adversaries, the reality of antagonistic causes, the ideological seriousness of war--also the reality of defeat or victory, war being a process whose triumph lies quite beyond these appearances. (70)

Baudrillard's sentiments in the above passage are also echoed in Heller and Pynchon's war fiction. In Catch-22, fascist sentiments are continually vented by American generals in a gesture that, like the figure of Cummings in Mailer's The Naked and the Dead, collapses the supposed ideological difference between German and American military forces. Stephen Potts notes that "the battle in Catch-22 is not between the Allies and the Axis, but between the powerless and the powerful, the victim and the victimizers" (Potts 46). Bruce Franklin has suggested that while World War II was supposed to be the war against fascism, Yossarian learns that the ideological gap separating American and German forces is nominal: "Yossarian discovers in 1944 what many more Americans later suspected: that these [fascist] forces might achieve their global empire draped in red, white, and blue" (123). Although propaganda stresses the ideological and moral gap between Allied and Axis powers, in Catch-22 the fascists are American military officers.

Given this lack of ideological difference, within certain power discourses that seek to condone and justify acts of war we should uncover a crisis of legitimation. Indeed, for Baudrillard power no longer exists; what we witness are merely the signs of power: "Power, too, for some time now produces nothing but signs of its resemblance" (Baudrillard 45). As ideological differences collapse into a play of simulation, the loss of real politics produces a "collective demand for signs of power--a holy union which forms around the disappearance of power" (Baudrillard 45). Power only now exists as a demand for signs of power in the face of a lost sense of the real. In Catch-22, the law which supposedly justifies the removal of the young women from the streets of Rome is Catch-22, a law which probably has no existence on paper but which only serves--to borrow Baudrillard's phrase--"to produce nothing but signs of its own resemblance." Yossarian encounters Catch-22 as an irrefutable sign of power which exists only as simulation. However, the play of simulation only legitimates the employment of brute force and the disappearance of justice. Clevinger, during his interrogation, is told by a bloated colonel that "Justice is a knee in the gut from the floor" (Heller 82). The simulation of power permits the unchecked use of force.

Herein lies the principal difference between Heller's and Baudrillard's treatment of power: the prevalence of varieties of simulation in Catch-22 only demonstrates the

effects of unbridled power rather than its disappearance. The war partakes of a hyperreal condition in that events are staged for the sake of representations. This staging of events constitutes the spectacle of war. David Seed notes that Catch-22 "does not entirely lose sight of the real. It becomes obscured, attenuated almost out of existence, but never disappears entirely" (53). The narrative of Catch-22, which circulates only to constantly return to Snowden's death, points to death as the limit of simulation and the final sign of the enactment of power upon the body. After struggling with all of the paradoxes and double-binds of language, Yossarian learns to read the simple message of Snowden's last moments: "It was easy to read the message in his entrails. Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret" (Heller 450). What cannot be simulated, copied or brought back are the war dead: Michaela, Snowden, Natelly, and others.

Catch-22 finally points to the need for an ethics of the gaze in which males acknowledge the materiality of the body. The entire war can only be waged on the condition that this materiality becomes devalued in the light of greater interests. Yossarian realizes that to view women simply in terms of his own desires is to enact the very restrictions that the war imposes upon himself. Significantly, Yossarian's attempt to minimize Snowden's suffering by administering morphine is thwarted by Milo's theft of the drug. Both Snowden and Yossarian find little

comfort in Milo's note, left in the first-aid kit, informing them that "What's good for M & M Enterprises is good for the country" (Heller 446). Like Michaela's corpse, Snowden's dying moments testify to the body as the scene of an enactment of brutal desire.

In the novels of Heller and Pynchon, the hyperreality of war--what Gravity's Rainbow identifies as its 'paracinematic' quality--occurs in relation to a real glimpsed in the figure of a dying person or corpse. In Catch-22, then, we find two ways of looking: first, the perverse, narcissistic gaze that stages spectacles for its own amusement and pleasure and which fails to recognize the needs of others (Cathcart, Peckem, Milo, Aarfy, and the stern face of Major ---- de Coverley, who never turns his eyes to the bodies of his dying men). Second, the gaze that recognizes the materiality of the body as the limit of simulation. One look stages reality whereas the other look confronts the shock of the real. Yossarian's shock at seeing Micheala's corpse comes, in part, from his memory of Snowden's death. Like Snowden, Michaela is also matter.

#### War As Cinema: Pynchon and the Spectacle of War

Fantasy visions of bloody orgies before the final daybreak. No human story, but a history of mankind, no disaster film, but disaster as film. (Syberberg Hitler: A Film From Germany)

Pynchon's consideration of the relationship between war and cinema marks a radical break within the tradition of the

particular the work of John Dos Passos, it is implied that the primary function of film is to indoctrinate ideologically viewers with a set of values which serve the interests of the state. Only with the advent of Heller's Catch-22 does an American novel suggest that the effects of cinema extend beyond questions of the reception and interpretation of representations. Catch-22 offers a new consideration of the role cinema plays in shaping the course of the war, in that events such as the bombing of the Italian village are executed solely with an eye to how they will appear on film. We can speak, then, of a certain excess effect of cinema that has little to do with the degree to which films transmit values to an audience. Catch-22 implies that the relationship of war to cinema exceeds questions of how film represents war; the question is rather one of the extent to which the war itself is staged for the benefit of film. Seen in this light, the battlefield quite literally becomes a hyperreal theatre of war staged for the benefit of the war's directors who, like General Peckem, view the consequences of their actions on film.

There are many similarities between Gravity's Rainbow and Catch-22.<sup>7</sup> Both works contain paranoid protagonists who rebel against the impersonal bureaucracies which have come to power during wartime. Both Heller and Pynchon present a vision of World War II as the triumph of the trans-national organizations that will dominate the post-war world. Rather



than fighting the enemy or learning to face and accept the possibility of one's own death, the protagonist's task is to make sense of the war and to find some path of escape from the clutches of organizational control. Stylistically, both novels present forms of burlesque and absurd humor as a challenge to the humorless authoritarian discourse of the organization.

Pynchon's treatment of film, however, extends well beyond the boundaries of Heller's consideration of this subject. The encyclopedic quality of GR allows Pynchon to explore the relationship between war and cinema on diverse levels. Yet how are we to understand the complex relationship between war, cinema, and the spectacle in GR? In her essay on Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's film Hitler: A Film From Germany (1978), Susan Sontag comments:

Syberberg offers a spectacle about spectacle: evoking "the big show" called history in a variety of dramatic modes--fairy tale, circus, morality play, allegorical pageant, magic ceremony, philosophical dialogue, Totentanz--with an imaginary cast of tens of millions and, as a protagonist, the devil himself. (Sontag 138-139)

While Sontag's remarks refer to Syberberg, they provide an excellent summary of Pynchon's approach to the "big show" of history--with the crucial exception that whereas Syberberg's film focuses on Hitler in order to exorcise him forever, Pynchon chooses to ignore him completely. At the end of this chapter, I shall compare both Syberberg and Pynchon's work. For now, suffice it to say that in the paranoid histories of GR, Hitler's absence forces the reader to

histories of GR, Hitler's absence forces the reader to consider other possible histories of the war, histories so divergent from our accepted social memories of World War II that Fritz Lang towers over that little Austrian Adolph who no longer warrants even a passing mention.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the large body of critical work on Pynchon, few critics have focussed exclusively on Pynchon's treatment of war. Khachig Tololyan considers GR as a new departure from the conventional war novel that "redefines not only the genre but our idea of war itself . . . in the context of a fiction whose imagined characters and events are embedded in a scrupulously accurate historical context" (Clerc 32). Tololyan concentrates on the wealth of historical detail concerning World War II that forms the backdrop of the novel. John M. Muste situates GR within the context of the American war novel and, in contrast to Tololyan's view of the novel as a radical departure from previous war fiction, instead posits GR as "a culmination of tendencies in those novels that deal with the experience of war" (Muste 6).

So far no critic has read GR as offering a sustained meditation on the complex interrelation of war and cinema. Pynchon's critics tend to consider war, paranoia, and cinema as distinct themes within GR. The 1983 anthology of essays Approaches to Gravity's Rainbow, edited by Charles Clerc, is an example of the establishment of such a set of ready divisions. While the anthology contains Tololyan's detailed essay on "War as Background in Gravity's Rainbow," along

with Clerc's meticulous account of the numerous references to film in the novel, the very separation of these themes runs counter to the form and concerns of Pynchon's work. The unquestioned reiteration of these thematic divisions have led Alec McHoul and David Wills to lament "It is often difficult to tell the secondary works [on Pynchon] apart, and no pleasure to try"(2). This tendency to readily compartmentalize Pynchon's themes is indoubtedly a response to the staggering complexity of his novels which, with the exception of Vineland, place enormous demands on the reader.

More critics have written on Pynchon's employment of cinema in GR than on the novel's treatment of war. Charles Clerc presents a detailed account of the numerous references to films in the novel and argues that Pynchon adapts numerous cinematic techniques to prose fiction. Clerc, David Cowart and John Stark all note how Pynchon's exploration of the relationship between the 'reel' world of cinema and the 'real' world of empirical reality effectively blurs the commonplace distinction between real life and the movies.<sup>9</sup> However, Pynchon's critics view this blurring only in terms of Pynchon's attempt to refute the positivist epistemology that serves as the foundation for the development of western science and technology. The emphasis placed by many critics on GR's consideration of entropy and paranoia--the two great themes of Pynchon's work--tends to ignore the degree to which the novel questions our prevalent social memory of the war. Indeed, divorced from the

historical setting of the novel, GR's blurring of the boundaries between reality and film may be taken as traits of a distinctly formalistic aesthetic sensibility which denies the existence of the outside world. Cowart, for example, places Pynchon within the context of the work of Vladimir Nabokov and Rainer Maria Rilke who, as writers, "simply deny the singularity of external reality, maintaining that reality is what artificers like themselves create" (Cowart 61).

While these readings are of value, they suffer in part from a rhetorical division of themes that are not present in GR. The ready separation of war from cinema has produced readings of Pynchon in which GR's critique of positivist epistemology is divorced from the novel's scrupulous attention to historical detail, such as the development of the German rocket program during World War II. For while even a cursory first reading of GR reveals Pynchon's almost obsessive fascination with the way cinema becomes 'real life,' the blurring of filmic reality with external reality cannot be considered outside of the theatre of war that forms the backdrop of the novel.

My reading of war and cinema in GR is divided into two sections. The first section presents a close reading of the links between the A-4 rocket and film. I begin by considering the V-2 as a spectacular weapon and support this reading with references to Paul Virilio's War and Cinema: the Logistics of Perception. Virilio suggests a connection

between the development of ballistical weapons and the production of the spectacle of war that is vital to an appreciation of the historical background behind Pynchon's association of cinema with ballistics. The section concludes with a discussion of how GR presents the spectacle of rocket flight, as depicted in Lang's Die Frau im Mond (1928), as a dream that finds its technical realization in the construction of the A-4 rocket. Taking a term from GR, I name this process of realization, in which cinematic dreams become a part of real life, the "paracinematic." The section concludes with an account of how GR presents the paracinematic process as beyond the sequence of cause and effect that characterizes our sense of the "one way flow of western time" (GR 724). The second section returns to address questions fundamental to this dissertation; how does Pynchon emplot World War II? What relations exist between cinema as a mass entertainment industry and the popular remembrance of war? The section ends by agreeing with Dale Carter's claim that GR posits post-war power as residing in the spectacle. Unlike Carter, however, I argue that Pynchon also affirms cinema's capacity to offer new emplotments of war beyond chronological time. By briefly comparing GR to Syberberg's Hitler: A Film From Germany, I argue that rather than denying history, Pynchon presents a non-chronological cinematic war novel that addresses the politics of the spectacle.

Pynchon, Virilio, and the (Para)cinematic Rocket

In War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception, Paul Virilio begins his reappraisal of the relation of war to cinema with a startling argument; modern warfare is fundamentally spectacular because in a total war, victory depends on instilling terror in civilian populations:

War can never break free from the magical spectacle because its very purpose is to produce that spectacle: to tell the enemy is not so much to capture as to 'captivate' him, to instill the fear of death before he actually dies. (W&C 5)

The psychological effects of rocket weapons are thus more important than the physical destruction caused by their impact and detonation. Hitler was always somewhat sceptical of the tactical value of the German rocket program.

However, Josef Goebbels, as Minister of Propaganda, valued their psychological effects and renamed them die Vergeltungswaffen [vengeance weapons]. The V-1 'doodlebug' and the V-2 rocket possessed military value as both psychological and conventional weapons. Both weapons were notoriously incapable of striking predesignated targets--indeed, the striking of set targets was never considered by the Nazis as their primary function. Goebbels called the first rocket the V-1 because he wanted the British to worry about what other 'vengeance weapons' the Nazis would unleash during the course of the war.

The psychological effects of the V-1 and V-2 lay in the element of surprise and uncertainty they brought as theatre weapons. According to Virilio, the military advantage

afforded by theatre weapons lies in their capacity to seize the perceptual fields of the enemy:

From the first missiles of World War Two to the lightning flash of Hiroshima, the theatre weapon has replaced the theatre of operations. Indeed the military term 'theatre weapon', though itself outmoded, underlines the fact that the history of battle is primarily the history of radically changing fields of perception. In other words, war consists not so much in scoring territorial, economic or other material victories as in appropriating the 'immateriality' of perceptual fields. (W&C 7)

The original designation of the V-2 rocket--as every reader of GR knows--was the 'Aggregate 4' (A-4). The A-1 to A-3 rockets were prototypes for the A-4, just as the A-4 itself was the prototype of the modern Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), not only because the technology developed for the A-4 led the way to the modern ICBM, but also for the reason that the primary military value of nuclear weapons--one hopes--is primarily psychological. In the case of nuclear weapons, the cold war of deterrence was waged in the psychological and perceptual arena. The policy of Mutually Assured Destruction transferred the theatre of war from a battle of objects to a conflict of perceptions. In the age of nuclear weapons, the term 'theatre weapon' is outmoded because the strategic value of the nuclear arsenal resides in its ability to deter the actual deployment of nuclear forces. According to this logic, nuclear weapons are built primarily for the psychological effect they have upon the enemy. For Virilio, World War II signalled the end of a total war involving armed combat, and the dawn of a

permanent state of psychological war--in which civilian populations are held hostage under the threat of nuclear attack that may never arrive--which he names "pure war."<sup>10</sup>

Both the V-1 and V-2 rockets were disturbing for Londoners for reasons other than their capacity to destroy life and property. During the war, the London populace had grown accustomed to aerial bombardment by German aircraft. Such bombing raids had become part of their daily routine. Both the V-1 and the V-2 brought about fundamental changes to that routine, as people did not know how to react to these weapons. Describing the first V-1 attack on London, David Johnson writes:

The same thing happened all over London: an alert, followed by the All Clear, then another alert that lasted over an hour. When the sirens first sounded, most people simply sat up in bed and listened--the first evidence of an air raid was the steady drumm-drumm-drumm of the approaching Luftwaffe bombers, then came the loud, penetrating bark of the local anti-aircraft batteries. Hearing nothing, people opened the blackout curtains for a look out of the window. There was nothing to be seen, especially at four-thirty in the morning, except a thousand stars that glowed and sparkled above the blacked-out streets.  
(Johnson 26)

During these early raids by an unknown weapon, people were waiting for what they called the "show" of anti-aircraft fire to light up the night sky. Johnson notes that the anxiety expressed by the British at the lack of Anti-Aircraft fire directed at the V-1 was a result of a set of responses conditioned during the Blitz of 1940-1941. Anti-Aircraft fire was always part of a show of retaliation,



as "the guns rarely brought down a Luftwaffe raider" (Johnson 45). While few German bombers were actually hit, "people were given a sense of 'hitting back' by the ear shattering bang-bang-bang-banging of the guns" (Johnson 45). At least with Luftwaffe raids those under bombardment could watch the ground forces returning fire. For a short time, the V-1 broke the established routine of an air-raid siren, followed by the sound of bombs and gunfire, and then the final sounding of the All Clear siren. The result was an exhausting uncertainty as to what kind of raid was taking place, as people awaited the All Clear siren signalling the end of an attack by an unseen weapon. As the attacks intensified, thousands of children were evacuated from the city to rural areas. In time, people learnt to listen for the characteristic 'buzz' of the V-1 or 'buzz bomb.' The abrupt end of this buzz signalled that the circling winged rocket was about to crash to the earth. To hear the droning buzz of the V-1, and to feel the house vibrate as it passed overhead, was an eerie experience. As a child growing up in Lancashire during the early 1960s, I listened intently to my grandparents' stories of the fear they experienced during a buzz-bomb raid. My grandfather's only brother was killed by a V-1 in 1944.

The V-2 was even more frightening than its predecessor. At least the distinct buzzing sound of the doodlebug gave people a chance to find shelter from its impending blast. The V-2, however, travelled up to twice the speed of sound

before impact. As a result, the survivors only heard the sonic boom of the rocket after its explosion. The perceptual field of its victims was totally captured; they could never hear the sound of the rocket before it struck. The V-2 reversed the usual pattern of auditory clues of an air assault as, in the words of one its survivors, "The bang of the explosion was followed by the roar of the rocket's faster-than-sound descent which . . . made it seem bigger and more frightening" (Quoted in Johnson 131). The V-2's speed produced a sense of fatality unknown during the time of the Blitz. What hope could one have against a weapon one heard coming only after the sound of its detonation?

The opening sentences of GR establish a connection between the rocket and our inability to understand the sound of its fall: "A screaming comes across the sky. It has happened before, but there is nothing to compare it to now" (3). The first feature of the rocket identified by GR is its unique ability to reverse the normal ordering of sensory impressions. This reversal fascinates Ned Pointsman, a sinister Pavlovian scientist, who considers the unique properties of the rocket a valuable opportunity to research what Pavlov named the "ultraparadoxical" stage of subject conditioning in which a subject perceives an effect as preceding a cause. He proposes to his colleague, Kevin Spectro "suppose we considered the war itself as a laboratory? when the V-2 hits, you see, first the blast, then the sound of its falling . . . the normal order of the

stimuli reversed that way" (GR 49). The rocket's terror lies in the public's inability to respond to any sound cues which would signal an impending strike, as the rocket reverses the usual ordering of sensory information. Only Tyrone Slothrop--who, as a child, had his penis conditioned by Lazlo Jamf to become erect in the presense of a plastic used in the rocket, namely, Imipolex G--appears sensitized to the rocket's approach. A map of Slothrop's sexual conquests corresponds exactly to a map of subsequent rocket strikes in the Greater London area. The puzzle facing Pointsman lies in whether this correspondence is coincidental or a result of Slothrop's hyper-sensitivity to the Imipolex G plastic. The action of the first section of GR presents this puzzle, which the novel never resolves.

In GR, the rocket heralds a new development in the manufacture and production of spectacular weapons. The V-2 terrorizes a population because, unlike the situation in aerial bombardment from flying aircraft, the survivors are literally unable to see what hit them. All that can be seen of the V-2 is the impact crater it leaves in its wake. In this manner, the rocket resonates with the Nazi aesthetics of Albert Speer who designed monuments for Hitler's Germany according to his sense of how they would look as ruins. GR further asserts the degree to which the flight path of the rocket has a distinctly architectural form that betrays "The Albert Speer Touch" (298):

Somebody during the thirties was big on parabolas anyhow, and Albert Speer was in charge of the New

German Architecture then, and later he went on to become Minister of Munitions, and nominal chief customer for the A-4. (GR 298)

The rocket, both as a weapon and as the epitome of fascistic aesthetic sensibilities, stands as the pinnacle of fascist architecture in that it combines an obsession with speed and mobility with the spectacle of an awesome power that can only be observed once it has dealt its blow. The next logical step for the rocket engineers would be to devise a projectile that one could only see after detonation. Small wonder, then, that by the end of GR we are informed by a frenetically speeding narrative voice that "The Password In The Zone This Week is FASTER--THAN, THE-SPEEDOFLIGHT" (726). We can, of course, read the last run-on word in the above sentence as "the speed o' flight." Pynchon frequently points out how the desire to achieve a particular scientific goal leads the scientist, as quest hero, to an encounter with that which disrupts the very logic of the scientific method being employed. Hence, Pointsman finds himself fascinated with the rocket's capacity to reverse the usual ordering of sensory information, just as the realization of a faster-than-light projectile would mark the end of flight as the passage of an observable object through space. The final dream of flight is to go faster than flight itself.

Pynchon connects the rocket to cinema in two ways. First, the V-2's reversal of the conventional ordering of sound before impact can only be understood in cinematic terms:

Imagine a missile one hears approaching only after it explodes. The reversal! A piece of time neatly snipped out . . . a few feet of film run backwards . . . the blast of the rocket, fallen faster than sound--then growing out of it the roar of its own fall, catching up to what's already death and burning . . . a ghost in the sky. (GR 48)

The rocket literally manifests the properties of filmic reversal in the external world. Yet the sense of the rocket's impact as "a few feet of film run backwards" has a more than metaphoric significance. For Pynchon, the development of the rocket is inseparable from the German project of mathematically charting the movement of bodies through space. In this way, the history of ballistics and film are inseparably fused:

Three hundred years ago mathematicians were learning to break the cannonball's rise and fall into stairsteps of range and height,  $\Delta x$  and  $\Delta y$ , allowing them to grow smaller and smaller, approaching zero as armies of eternally shrinking midgets galloped upstairs and down again, the patter of their diminishing feet growing finer, smoothing out into continuous sound. This analytic legacy has been handed down intact--it brought the technicians at Peenemunde to peer at the Askania films of Rocket flights, frame by frame,  $\Delta x$  by  $\Delta y$ , flightless themselves . . . film and calculus, both pornographies of flight. (GR 567)

The production of the V-2 marks the application of cinematic techniques to the waging of total war. The history of cinema, then, is already bound to the history of flight, as to watch a motion picture is to simulate the movement of bodies through space. Furthermore, rocket performance is studied on film because the rocket's speed is too fast for

visual observation. Pynchon's association of cinema with ballistics brings to mind Virilio's claim that the appeal or thrill of cinema lies in its capacity to mimic the speed and mobility of moving bodies: "[T]he first difference between cinema and photography is that the viewpoint can be mobile, can get away from static focus and share the speed of moving objects" (W&C 16). Pynchon and Virilio both suggest that cinema and rocketry exist as the technological realization of dreams of flight.

Second, Pynchon foregrounds the degree to which dreams of flight--and indeed the dreams of power behind the practice of total war--were realized on film before the development of technologies allowed these dreams to be accomplished in the theatre of World War II. Indeed, all the major characters of GR must come to recognize the extent to which the war exists as a spectacular realization of dreams and desires previously expressed within the domain of cinema. For Pynchon, the spectacular nature of war lies not in the mass mobilization of troops or the waging of major battles, but rather in the degree to which dreams of flight and power literally find a vehicle for their expression in the V-2 rocket.

Franz Pökler, a rocket engineer working on the development of the V-2, comes to learn the extent to which film brings dreams to life. One evening, we are told, Pökler and his wife Leni decided to go to the movies:

They saw Die Frau im Mond. Franz was amused, condescending. He picked at technical points.

He knew some of the people who'd worked at the special effects. Leni saw a dream of flight. One of many possible. Real flight and dreams of flight go together. Both are part of the same movement. Not A before B, but all together. . . . (GR 159)

Fritz Lang's Die Frau im Mond (1928) was the first film to depict the rocket as a mode of transportation. Towards the very end of GR, so as to reassert the close connections between film and rocketry, Pynchon notes that "The countdown as we know it, 10-9-8-u.s.w., [etc] was invented by Fritz Lang for the Ufa film Die Frau im Mond" (753). For Leni, perhaps, this would come as no surprise. She is an astute enough movie-goer to appreciate how Lang's film embodies a dream of flight that will spurn the creation of new technologies. Lang's film marks a turning point in the history of rocketry. During the late 1920s Hermann Oberth, whose work on the practical development of rockets lacked vital funding, decided to collaborate with Lang as a technical advisor to the film. Virilio notes that "[I]t was only the hope of UFA financial backing for his real experiments that drove Oberth to collaborate on the technical planning of the film, and in the end Lang himself paid half the cost of Oberth's experiments" (W&C 58).

Pöckler, however, can only see the technical deficiencies of Lang's rocket. Like Pointsman, he's a "cause-and-effect man" (159) who believes his work consists only of the dispassionate search for scientific knowledge which can then be applied to the solution of technical

problems. As such, Pökler remains unaware of that element of his work that involves "pornographies of flight" (567). The only pornography to ever arouse Pökler was one of GR's numerous fictitious films, Gerhardt Von Göll's Alpdrücken [Nightmare], starring Margherita Erdmann, that features a long scene where Margherita is whipped by her inquisitors. Pökler was so aroused by the film that he returned home to make love to Leni, whom he imagined as Margherita, and so sired his only daughter, Ilse. Leni finally leaves Pökler, in part because of his inability to acknowledge that his work on the German rocket program, rather than being a dispassionate contribution to scientific knowledge, will finally produce a weapon of mass destruction. Leni's departure, however, only serves to throw him deeper into his work.

As he perfects the rocket, Pökler comes to understand the extent to which his work is the expression of desires only previously expressed on film. For in order to guarantee Pökler's cooperation in the construction of the Schwarzergerat device, Major Weissmann will only allow Pökler to see Ilse, in a children's resort town named Zwölfkinder, once every spring. Pökler now finally comprehends that the "rapid flashing of successive stills to counterfeit movement" (GR 407) that has its basis in calculus, has potential applications beyond the domain of rocketry: "Pökler was about to be given proof that these techniques had been extended past images on film, to human



lives" (407). Ilse, conceived from film, has now become a living film: "That's how it happened. A film. How else? Isn't that what they made of my child, a film?" (398)

As Weissmann only allows Pökler to visit Ilse once a year, Pökler cannot be sure whether it is merely a child actor playing the part of Ilse, a suspicion reinforced by the surrealist Zwölfkinder, with its "imitation wilderness" (420) and set-like "Antartic Panorama" (which includes stuffed penguins, plaster snow, and hidden projectors that throw "images of the aurora on a white scrim" (420)). Pökler's struggle to release Ilse and Leni from the re-education camp in which they are interned presents one of the novel's many ironies. One spring, Ilse is granted permission to watch an A-4 launch with Pökler. The launch is a disaster, as shortly after lift-off the rocket crashes to the west of Peenemunde. After Pökler explains that the rocket is supposed to follow a parabolic path, Ilse inquires:

"Where does it go?"  
 "Wherever we tell it to."  
 "May I fly in it someday? I'd fit inside, wouldn't I?"  
 She asked impossible questions. "Someday," Pökler told her. "Perhaps someday to the moon." (GR 409-410).

The very Pökler who could only see technical faults in Lang's Die Frau im Mond now expresses a dream of flight to his film-daughter. Ilse's obsession with this dream further suggests the close connections between imaginary and real flight; her moon house, where she plans to live with her

reunited Mutti and Papi, is located in "a small pretty crater in the Sea of Tranquillity called Maskelyne B" (410)--the exact location of the first Apollo moon landing.

Pökler is never reunited with Leni and Ilse. Rather, as he wanders amongst the starved, naked prisoners of the Dora prison camp, who labored on the manufacture of the rocket under penalty of death, he realizes not only that Ilse had all along been interned within Dora, but also that "All his vacuums, his labyrinths, had been the other side of this" (432). Pökler's rocket dreams were mathematical in nature. Although his sexual fantasies betray a streak of sadism, on the whole his character appears somewhat timid. Yet his dreams--like those dreamt by Slothrop under the truth serum administered to probe his unconscious racial fears--are subject to manipulation by people such as Weissmann who wish to extend their power through technologies of control. The war, then, operates by just this transformation of cinematic fantasy into the domain of lived experience, and the primary symbol of this process in GR is the A-4 rocket. Pökler's failure to recognize this process constitutes his primary weakness. Through Pökler, Pynchon implies that any history of modern weaponry, and indeed any history of World War II, that ignores the role cinema plays in "making the unreal reel," fails to address the relationship between war and cinema.

Rather than positing a causal model of change, in which a representation causes an observable effect, Pynchon offers

a series of connections between reality and film. Cooper notes that in GR, "The reality does not always precede and engender the film, nor does the film always precede and engender the reality" (Cooper 118). Ballistics did not cause the production of either the V-2 or film; rather ballistics, film, and dreams of flight form part of a series of events which, while not part of a causal sequence, nevertheless engender the rocket. Similarly, Lang's Die Frau im Mond exists as part of a series of events that together converge not only in the production of the V-2, but also in the Apollo moon landing. Likewise, few would argue that George Lucas's Star Wars (1977) caused the development of the U.S. Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI). Yet the SDI program clearly exists in some strictly non-causal relationship to both Lucas's film and to a host of other science fiction movies featuring ray guns of one type or another.<sup>11</sup> Both Pökler and Pointsman, as "cause and effect" men, adhere to a mechanistic Newtonian world-view, in which an action produces a reaction just as a stimulus produces a response. A large body of critical work has addressed Pynchon's critique of Newtonian science and his presentation of a quantum world-view in which notions of causality are rejected.<sup>12</sup>

In GR, the film director Gerhardt Von Göll coins the term "paracinematic" to describe the process by which a propaganda film he directed for the British appears to have become a part of reality. As part of a British campaign

named Operation Black Wing, Von Göll directs a film in which African SS Officers--the "Schwarzkommando"--are shown to be in control of an A-4 rocket. The purpose of the film is to convince German troops that the fictional Black troops, who are drawn from Germany's African colonies, constitute an internal threat to national security. Pynchon's paracinematic occurs when cinematic events appear to have become part of external reality. Von Göll--who is also known as "Der Springer"--is suprised to discover that the Schwarzkommando not only exist, but also possess a working A-4 rocket:

Since discovering that Schwarzkommando are really in the Zone, leading real, paracinematic lives that have nothing to do with him or the phony Schwarzkommando footage he shot last winter in England for Operation Black Wing, Springer has been zooming around in a controlled ecstasy of megalomania. He is convinced that his film has somehow brought them into being. "It is my mission," he announces to Squalidozzi, with the profound humility that only a German movie director can summon, "to sow in the Zone seeds of reality." (GR 388)

Von Göll convinces Squalidozzi, an Argentinian anarchist, that by filming the life of Martin Fierro--who is the hero of José Hernandez's poem of the same name--Squalidozzi and his anarchist followers will be able to return to an ideal pre- state Argentina that will be created by the film itself. As with all of the major narratives contained within GR, we are never informed of the final outcome of this project. Yet we can be sure that no such paracinematic Argentina ever comes into being. Von Göll's belief that he

can "sow seeds of reality" is merely a symptom of his megalomania that, in its latter stages, finally becomes chronic insanity. For the paracinematic eludes the very notion of cause and effect that underlines Von Göll's mistaken belief in his own powers. When Slothrop and Narrisch rescue Von Göll from Peenemunde, they find him under the influence of Sodium Amytal, blabbering such profundities as "She baffs at nothing, the heterospeed" (512). Von Göll's mental decline stresses his inability to control the paracinematic process; as with Pökler and Pointsman, his belief in cause and effect results in his own downfall.

In GR, the entire theatre of war constitutes the Zone in which cinema erupts into the fabric of everyday life. Pynchon suggests that cinema has an affinity with magic in which totems and signs, rather than functioning as representations, transform the real world. Perhaps the emphasis Pynchon places on mysticism, occult knowledge, divination and seances--that under the auspices of the White Visitation are all clearly identified as part of the war effort--implies that these practices are techniques of pre-cinematic magic. However, given Pynchon's critique of cause and effect as the only model by which we may understand events, we must be wary of assuming that cinema, like magic, strictly causes these events to happen. As we have seen, Pynchon's emphasis on the development of the A-4 rocket foregrounds the degree to which the war in GR is a zone, or

interface, between cinema and the world in which events on film pass into paracinematic existence.

So far in this chapter I have offered an account of GR's rethinking of World War II's relation to cinema. We need now to address the more general question of how we are to understand World War II once we abandon chronological narrative. This question is fundamental to both Pynchon's presentation of war as spectacle and his attempt to emplot the networks of power at work in the post-war world. For GR's abandonment of chronological time as the only method of remembering the war does not mean, as Russell claims, that "its central message is the denial of history, the denial of the possibility of significant change" (Clerc 271). On the contrary, GR posits cinema as a medium that can either transform us into mere spectators (where we passively stare, eyes fixed to the screen, at the big show of history presented to us by another for our amusement) or as that which presents us with new methods of emplotting history beyond chronological narrative.

A Film We Have Not Learned To See:  
Remembering War as Cinema

Charles Clerc lists numerous cinematic devices contained within GR, including: "[q]uick cuts, dominant contrast, flashbacks and flashforwards, montages, dissolves, texturing, medium-long-close shots, [and] freezing" (148). Pynchon's narrative techniques apply such cinematic devices

in order to shoot rather than tell his novel. GR further reinforces our sense of being at the movies by presenting scenes that conform to the conventions of a wide variety of film genres: westerns, musicals, slapstick comedies, cartoons, science fiction films, along with a number of sets from the German Expressionist period, are allowed to dictate the character and tone of numerous episodes. We also encounter a staggering number of direct allusions to specific films including Metropolis (1926), Die Frau im Mond (1928), White Zombie (1932), King Kong (1933), The Wizard of Oz (1939), Going My Way (1944), and The Return of Jack Slade (1955).<sup>13</sup> (Indeed, in order to make the task of finding the year of each movie somewhat easier for Pynchon scholars, Pynchon's 1990 novel Vineland--true to the format required by the MLA--thoughtfully documents the year each film mentioned in Vineland was made!)

The host of references to these films indicates the degree to which many of the novel's major characters use cinema as a basis for interpreting their experience of the world. Tchitcherine's ride through the Kirghiz's Seven River county appears to him "like a Wild West movie" (GR 338). Both Slothrop and Margherita actively model themselves after movie stars; Slothrop combs "his hair into the usual sporty Bing Crosby pompadour" (184) and frequently imitates Cary Grant. As a film actress, Margherita imitates her own movie roles to the extent that when she firsts meets Slothrop, she begs him to whip her in a re-enactment of the

inquisition scene from Von Göll's Alpdrücken. Margherita's extreme identification with her own roles results in her inability to distinguish real life from the movies. For Margherita, the war is only another studio and her life a part she must play till the end: "When Greta hears shots out in the increasingly distant streets, she will think of the sound stages of her early career, and will take the explosions as cue calls" (446). The progressive disintegration of Slothrop's personality occurs in direct proportion to his increasing identification with both movie-stars and comic book heroes. Once inside the reception party for the Potsdam conference, he nonchalantly claims to other guests that "I'm that Errol Flynn" (381) and even dreams of "getting a contract for the rest of his life with a radio network, o-or even a movie studio!" (381). Pynchon warns us that the temptation to take movie roles as one's own identity is fraught with danger, as we place our sense of self in the hands of others: "you are trapped inside Their frame with your wastes piling up, ass hanging out all over Their Movieola viewer, waiting for Their editorial blade" (694).

If cinema carries the potential for individuals to adopt "the fake film-lives of strangers" (GR 684), then does Pynchon's employment of film genres further imply that the past now only has meaning as a movie? Does GR offer us only "fake film" memories of the war? To answer these questions in the affirmative is to place GR within Frederic Jameson's



category of the postmodern as a cultural dominant that has, as one of its characteristic features, a sense of the "loss of the radical past" (Jameson 70) in which "we are condemned to seek History by way of our pop images and simulacra of that history, which itself remains forever out of reach" (Jameson 71). Such a view of cinema's reduction of history to a host of pop images and simulacra is shared by Guy Debord:

The spectacle, as the present social organization of the paralysis of history and memory, of the abandonment of history built on the foundation of historical time, is the false consciousness of time. (SOS 158)

The diversity of genres in GR would then testify to the loss of history and the rise of a popular false consciousness brought about by Hollywood's relentless production of the spectacle. Yet while Pynchon clearly charts the ascendancy of the media as a locus of power in the post-war world, the narrative structure of GR places intense pressure on Slothrop--and the reader--to make sense of the war. Rather than being placed in the position of passive spectators experiencing the "false consciousness of time," GR forces us to confront the relationship between the narrative modes by which we emplot the past into a narrative history, the political investments present in those narratives, and effects of the technology of cinema upon the process of social memory.

Although GR reminds us that we're at the movies--especially at the end of the novel when we are informed that

"The screen is a dim page spread before us, white and silent" (760)--the complexity and exhausting length of GR never allows us to become passive spectators. Pynchon's relentless bombardment of the reader with a constant stream of information, that appears to be on the threshold of revealing the architectronic structure of the entire novel, along with the bizarre paracinematic convergence of cinema and the world, places us not within the familiar territory of the movie theatre but rather within the Zone itself. Within the Zone, both characters and readers are forced to abandon their position as spectators, or tourists, in order to engage in new interpretative endeavors: "We have to look for power sources here, and distribution networks we were never taught, routes of power our teachers never imagined, or were encouraged to avoid" (GR 521).

The question of cinema's relation to the narrative genres available to emplot the war is further compounded by Pynchon's presentation of war as a spectacular ruse. To the extent that our histories of the war--with their emphasis on military battles--support the notion of war as a conflict of nation-states, they ignore the role played by multinational cartels:

Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling. The murdering and the violence are self-policing, and can be entrusted to non-professionals. The mass nature of wartime death is useful in many ways. It serves as spectacle, as diversion from the real movements of the War. It provides raw material to be recorded into History, so that children may be taught History as sequences of violence, battle after battle, and be more prepared for the adult world.

[. . .] The true war is a celebration of markets.  
(GR 105)

The history of the war--as a version of events told to schoolchildren--ignores the celebration of markets. The war exists as a staged conflict between rival interests who mobilize tremendous resources to achieve their ends. To consider the war as a staged spectacle requires a rejection of the allegorical master narrative that emplots the war as struggle between good and evil. Mr. Information tells Skippy that "The Germans-and-Japs story was only one, rather surrealistic version of the real War" (645). The breakdown of the allegorical narrative is a direct result of a new network of power, symbolized by the V-2 rocket, that no longer resides in any one nation state. The rocket, as a spectacular weapon, already suggests that the war now exists beyond any one geographical region; contemplating the rocket's path, Jessica asks herself "where is the war?" (54). She views the rocket's ability to kill her before she can hear it coming as "Biblical, maybe, spooky as an old northern fairy tale, but not The War, not the great struggle of good and evil the wireless reports everyday" (54). Geographical space--countries, towns and cities--are merely delineated areas of the stage; they are all part of the great set on which the war is shot. As Slothrop, in the guise of Rocketman, approaches the Potsdam conference, he almost laughs at the foolishness of the guards who have failed to recognize the staged quality of the war:

Their preoccupation is with forms of danger the War has taught them--phantoms they may be doomed now, some of them, to carry for the rest of their lives. Fine for Slothrop, though--it's a set of threats he doesn't belong to. They are still back in geographical space, drawing deadlines and authorizing personnel, and the only beings who can violate their space are safely caught and paralyzed in comic books. (379)

The war over territories, then, only exists as a staged deception. Pynchon challenges us to consider fights over territory as nothing less than a spectacle that blinds us to transnational organizations that conduct the war for their own profit; organizations "like Shell, with no real country, no side in any war, no specific face or heritage" (243). The parallels between Catch-22 and GR are striking, as both Heller and Pynchon remember the role of private cartels and corporations in the war.

At times, GR suggests that while multinationals like Shell Oil and IG Farben benefited from the war, competition between various technologies for limited resources dictated the course of the conflict:

It means this War was never political at all, the politics was all theatre, all just to keep the people distracted . . . secretly, it was being dictated instead by the needs of technology . . . by a conspiracy between human beings and techniques, by something that needed the energy-burst of war, crying, "Money be damned, the very name of [insert name of Nation] is at stake," but meaning, most likely, dawn is nearly here, I need my night's blood, my funding, funding, ahh more, more. . . . The real crises were crises of allocation and priority, not among firms--it was only staged to look that way--but among the different Technologies, Plastics, Electronics, Aircraft, and their needs which are understood only by the ruling elite. . . . (GR 521)

We are never able to name, with absolute certainty, the forces staging the war as a diversionary tactic. Yet the primary question facing both Slothrop and the reader is "if the war is a movie set then who are the directors?" GR acknowledges that it may be impossible to arrive at a final definitive answer to this question. For example, following the above passage, the narrator undercuts the role played by technology in staging the war: "Go ahead, capitalize the T on technology, deify it it'll make you feel less responsible" (GR 521).

Yet the possibility that there may be no conclusive answer to the question as to who finally stages the war, does not mean that the question itself must be considered useless. For the question signifies not only a desire for historical knowledge on the part of the querist, but also the adoption of a particular position in regard to the spectacle of war. If the war is all theatre, then we must make a distinction between spectating as an active, hermeneutic activity, and spectating as the passive enjoyment of "mindless pleasures" (GR 270). At the end of GR, the projector bulb has burned out yet "in the darkening and awful expanse of screen something has kept on, a film we have not learned to see" (760). GR's primary concern is to teach us possible ways of seeing the war as a film still visible after the projector bulb's demise. As such, the novel demands that we reject many of our preconceptions about the nature and character of World War II. While

Pynchon implies that the war indicates the increasing power of multinational cartels, the process of remembering the war as staged is more important than a recognition of power of multinational corporations.

Pynchon challenges our shared, social memories of the war in order to posit social memory as the site of an ideological contest between dominant and marginal narrative histories. I have argued that the war novel always adopts a stance with regard to dominant social memories, in that the war novelist may either challenge or reinscribe the dominant narratives of social memory. Paul Connerton, in his book How Societies Remember, calls attention to the role social memory plays in the formation and maintenance of a social order:

Concerning social memory in particular, we may note that images of the past commonly legitimate a present social order. It is an implicit rule that participants in any social order must presuppose a shared memory. To the extent that their memories of a society's past diverge, to that extent its members can share neither experiences nor assumptions. (Connerton 3)

The alienation experienced by all Pynchon's protagonists is a direct result of their social marginalization. In The Crying of Lot 49, as Oedipa begins to unravel Pierce Inverarity's will, she stumbles upon the mysterious Tristero. As her understanding of American history becomes marginalized--to the extent that she sees the US Postal service as engaged in a centuries long war with the remnants of the Thurn and Taxis empire--Oedipa finds herself

increasingly receptive to the ideas of marginal subgroups, such as the Peter Pinguid society, who all offer her divergent theories and histories of America. In her attempt to sort Pierce's will, she engages in a questioning of all her previously accepted social memories of America: "She had dedicated herself, weeks ago, to making sense of what Inverarity had left behind, never suspecting that the legacy was America" (Lot 49 178).

Pynchon's first novel, V, explores the breakdown of a common social memory of World War I. Within the novel, numerous characters emplot their own history of the war. Signor Mantissa subscribes to an almost Viconian theory of history as a series of cycles, "History would continue to recapitulate the same" (V 14). Eigenvalue appears to view history largely as a series of coincidences whereas Stencil begins to emplot a paranoid history of the war in which a mysterious woman, named V, appears to have exerted a powerful control over the course of European politics. At times, Stencil recognizes that his own paranoid histories are an attempt to cover up the possibility that the war has no structure or meaning: "Ten million dead. Gas. Passchendaele. Let that be now a large figure, now a chemical formula, now an historical account. But dear lord, not the Nameless Horror" (V 459). In GR, this view of history as the 'Nameless Horror' is named as "anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many

of us can bear for long" (GR 434). Oedipa must also face the frightening possibility of anti-paranoia:

For there either was some Tristero beyond the appearance of the legacy of America, or there was just America and if there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant to it, was as an alien, unfurrowed, assumed full circle into some paranoia. (Lot 49 182)

The condition of anti-paranoia remains unbearable because without historical accounts we lose our sense of the past, and hence our identity. Paranoid histories, while rejecting established histories as 'Their' account of the past, provide part of the shared social memory of cultural subgroups such as the Peter Pinguid society in The Crying of Lot 49 and the Counterforce in GR. In GR, Pirate Prentice names this process of establishing a sub-cultural identity through the emplotment of a paranoid history as "creative paranoia": "Creative paranoia means developing at least as thorough a We-system as a They-system" (GR 638).<sup>14</sup> We must note that once social memories are subjected to a radical questioning, they can never return to their previous condition as unquestioned repositories of a collective past. Oedipa seeks an organization which would affirm her own paranoid history, for without the support of others her own view of the past only exists as a solipsistic projection.

Dana Polan, in his study of American films of the 1940s, argues that paranoia as an interpretative activity--rather than as a psychiatric pathology--acquires a political dimension during a period of total war. According to Polan,



the "war-affirmative ideology" of American World War II propaganda itself fosters a paranoid mentality in which every event and individual action remains inseparable from the closed system of meaning which is the war:

Not merely a system of equivalences, the war-affirmative ideology tries to set up a regulated system of regulated transformations: so much violence over there is readable in terms of so much self-interest here. There is the institution of an overwhelming calculus of meaning that implies that no element in the society exists on its own; rather, each element gains force from its articulation with other elements. The discourse of war affirmation works, then, to write reality within the monocular framework of a singular, closed set of values. (Polan 46)

The closed system of values established by war-affirmative ideology is always posited as being of more value than the life of any one individual. To reject such a war-affirmative ideology, then, entails favoring one's own life over that of the calculus of meaning established by war propaganda. Hence, Yossarian's paranoia, in Catch-22, when he complains to Clevenger that the enemy's trying to kill him, is a symptom of his refusal to believe in war-affirmative ideology:

"They're trying to kill me," Yossarian told him calmly.

"No one's trying to kill you," Clevenger cried.

"Then why are they shooting at me?" Yossarian asked.

"They're shooting at everyone," Clevenger answered.

"They're trying to kill everyone."

"And what difference does that make?" (Heller 17)

Both Slothrop and Yossarian, as paranoid protagonists, struggle to make sense of the absurd war that surrounds

them. As an interpretative method, paranoia suspends war-affirmative ideology so as to allow for the consideration of other war narratives while foregrounding the political investment present within such ideology.

With this in mind, we are now able to appreciate how Pynchon ties together the production of paranoid histories with the rejection of war-affirmative ideology and the formation of sub-cultural group identities that define themselves in opposition to mainstream society. For during wartime, the emplotment of paranoid histories cannot be divorced from the spectacle of war. In rejecting the dominant social memory of the war as a conflict between nation states, Pynchon reveals the contradictions present within such a social memory.

In GR, the war is remembered as a staged spectacle, orchestrated by others for their own purposes. In such a paranoid history, national leaders are mere puppets placed upon the world political stage in order to keep us distracted from the real sites of political power. Rather than remembering Roosevelt's death as the loss of a national leader, in GR this event is recalled as a mere replacement of a constructed puppet:

Whoever it was, posing in the black cape at Yalta with the other leaders, conveyed beautifully the sense of Death's wings, rich, soft and black as the winter cape, prepared a nation of starers for the passing of Roosevelt, a being They assembled, a being They would dismantle. (GR 374)

The nebulousness of the ubiquitous "They" of GR--in particular in the last section of the novel entitled "The Counterforce"--indicates the condition of uncertainty characterized by paranoid histories of the war. For in rejecting the accepted social memory of the past, the paranoid struggles to establish criteria for the production of shared narratives. Commenting on Pynchon's first novel V, Robert Holton concludes that:

In this sense postmodern historical relativism can be seen as the dissolution or delegitimization of any one cultural group's claim to sole authority in the construction of historical narrative, an authority that is ultimately political in nature. (Holton 327)

Yet we must also note that Pynchon presents paranoia as a symptom of the delegitimization of all master narratives which, in its production of alternative historical accounts, nevertheless constructs a chronological narrative based upon "the one-way flow of European time" (GR 724). The paranoid questions the legitimacy of the narrative, rather than the actual method of emplotment that arranges past events into a chronological narrative.

Unlike Stencil and Oedipa, Slothrop finally passes beyond this sense of chronological time. The effects of this mysterious passage, however, include a complete loss of Slothrop's identity, memory, and physical shape; by the time of Slothrop's scattering in GR, Pig Bodine is "one of the few who can still see Slothrop as any sort of integral creature any more" (740). Once outside chronological time,

Slothrop abandons his attempts to interpret both his own personal history and the history of forces at work during the war: "Like signals set out for lost travelers, shapes keep repeating for him. Zonal shapes he will allow to enter but won't interpret, not any more" (567). For Slothrop, the Zone is a continuous flow of information that no longer requires emplotment; yet this experience is also the final stage of his own alienation from others and signals the demise of his own memory. Earlier in the novel *Pointsman*, as a Pavlovian scientist whose entire methodology is based on notions of cause and effect, muses on Roger Mexico's sense of events as manifestations of probabilities: "What if Mexico's whole generation have turned out like this? Will Postwar be nothing but 'events,' newly created one moment to the next? No links? Is it the end of history?" (56) Slothrop's disintegration poses the question as to whether or not there can be any coherent history, or social memory, outside of a chronological narrative.

The answer to this question depends on the extent to which we view Slothrop as an ideal paranoid historian of the war. In other words, should we take Slothrop's experience of passing into non-chronological time as a model for all attempts at understanding time outside a chronological structure? We should remember that Slothrop is a lazy paranoid whose bursts of interpretative activity are punctuated by long sessions of indulgent drug-taking and sensuous pleasures. Indeed, the narrator informs us that

Slothrop suffers from "that not-so-rare personality disorder known as Tannhäuserism" (GR 299). In both the Grimm and Wagner versions of the Tannhäuser legend, Tannhäuser abandons his quest so as to enjoy the sensuous delights offered by the Goddess Venus. At one crucial point in the novel, the narrator clearly compares Slothrop to the distracted knight: "And you are no knightly hero. The best you can compare with is Tannhäuser, the Singing Nincompoop" (GR 364). Slothrop, like Tannhäuser, fails in his quest because of his passion for "mindless pleasures"--a phrase Pynchon initially chose as the original title for GR. Slothrop's errant wanderings in non-chronological time betray his major character flaw; he is comfortable merely spectating the Zonal events that pass through him. As I have previously suggested, while the latter sections of the novel resist chronological emplotment--to the extent that we cannot even be certain if the rocket fired by Blicero, in the final chapter, is the same rocket Pirate Prentice views in the opening scene--we are never allowed to become passive observers of the novel's action. Slothrop's failure to interpret the Zone betrays his affinity with Tannhäuser, as he finally forgets his own quest. Slothrop's progress is always towards the domain of pleasure; in the course of passing through the Zone he moves beyond chemical and sensual pleasures towards the pure passive experience of Zonal shapes. Slothrop becomes the ultimate spectator, and as such is unable to solve any of the numerous mysteries

posed by both his own childhood and the enigma of the rocket-cartel.

The final scene of GR warns us about the political dangers of acquiescing to the seduction of the spectacle. Richard M. Zhubb, a caricature of Richard Nixon, leads us to our seats in the Orpheus Theatre. Within the walls of the theatre, which like Tannhäuser's cave are "as hard and glossy as coal" (GR 760), the audience cries for the movie to begin: "Come-on! Start-the-show!" (760). Above the theatre, a rocket falls above the heads of the audience. Zhubb's power resides in knowing how to stage a good show and how to provide "a nice secure home for them all, down in Orange County. Right next to Disneyland" (756). According to Dale Carter, this scene indicates the role of the American voter since the Kennedy administration: "The voters under Kennedy would spectate. Like improved and modernized Slothrop, they would enjoy a vicarious identification with their glamorous stars, a rapturous genuflection before the drama of Camelot" (Carter 142). Cinema invites a population to become "a nation of starers" who passively consume images of political power. In this set of relations between audience and spectacle, the voter--like a schoolchild learning history from a school textbook--passively watches the unfolding of history. Pynchon brings into question the passive relationship between spectator and history-as-film by forcing us, as readers of GR, into a position where we must acknowledge the provisional nature of our own war

histories. The radical politics of GR lies not so much in the content of any one of the myriad paranoid histories it presents to us, but rather in the process of interpreting history that Pynchon forces us to perform.

Given that Slothrop's Tannhäuserism disqualifies him as an ideal historian, the question remains as to how we are to remember the war outside of a chronological emplotment. For Pynchon, the answer to this question lies, paradoxically, in film. Cinema, as a set of representational and social practices, can foster a nation of spectators. Yet film, as a technology of moving pictures, provides a new sense of time as an eternal present. According to Charles Clerc: "film has only one time: the present" (107). This eternal present of film is the now of GR's final injunction to the reader: "Now Everybody--" (760). Film allows us to view the past within the temporal space of the present moment. In this way, GR emplots the war as a spectacle that occurs in the unfolding present of cinematic time.

If the entirety of Pynchon's exhausting and exhilarating meditation on war's relation to cinema bears a resemblance to any one film, then that film is surely Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's Hitler: A Film From Germany (1978). Like Pynchon, Syberberg moves outside chronological time. Susan Sontag's remarkable introduction to Syberberg's film concisely points to the role cinema's eternal present can play in allowing us to re-imagine the past as present:

Rather than devise a spectacle in the past tense, either by attempting to simulate "unrepeatable

reality" (Syberberg's phrase) or by showing it in photographic document, he proposes a spectacle in the present tense--"adventures in the head." Of course, for such a devoutly anti-realistic aesthetician, historical reality is, by definition, unrepeatable. (Sontag 140)

Syberberg's intention is to exorcise Hitler, the "Hitler within us" (Syberberg 3), in order to break free of the myth of Hitler as an all-powerful, dominating figure.

Syberberg's Hitler is literally a puppet, just as Hitler himself must be understood as the embodiment of a host of myths within the German psyche. Like Syberberg, Pynchon offers us "adventures in the head" for the purpose of exorcising our dominant social memories of the war. The critique of the spectacle further points to the American public's relation to the Vietnam War as primarily a conflict presented to them on television.

In sum, Syberberg's Hitler is a director who knows how to provide the masses with a good show. On the surrealist sound stage that forms the arena for Syberberg's exorcism of Hitler (a stage containing dolls, dildoes, guns, gallows, and numerous other symbols of the German psyche that found a vehicle for their expression in Hitler) the doll of Ludwig II entones a warning: "I warned you from the very outset, I warned that business, wheeling and dealing, movies, porno, politics, were a show, a show for the masses" (Syberberg 44). We are back once more within the Orpheus Theatre, with our political leaders directing us to our seats. Yet the mourning work required to dispel the desire for a strong



leader will be both painful and long. Moreover, by placing events within the eternal present of film, Syberberg forces us to confront Fascism's legacy in the modern world.

Although Pynchon makes no direct mention of Vietnam in GR, the legacy of World War II is the audience's insistent call for a show. This legacy is itself the desire for strong leadership and the staging of spectacles as public events held for the purpose of being captured on film. Consider, for example, the extent to which the 1935 Nuremberg rally of the Nazi Party Congress was an event entirely designed and orchestrated in terms of how the rally would appear on film. One year before the Nuremberg rally was held, Hitler recruited Leni Riefenstahl to direct Triumph of the Will (1935). About this film, Riefenstahl writes "the event was organized in the manner of a theatrical performance . . . everything was decided by reference to the camera" (Quoted in Virilio 55). This rally, in which participants are also spectators of events staged for the benefit of film, will find its final realization in the execution of the war. Nuremberg is thus transformed into an enormous movie-set in which Hitler directs "millions of unemployed Germans to relaunch war as an epic" (Virilio 54). The spectacle, then, becomes that which is staged for film. In this way, the Nuremberg rally prefigures war's relation to the spectacle, in that the war itself is already a war movie.

Syberberg's Hitler is both the quintessential movie director of the twentieth-century and a movie-star. He knew how to provide the masses with a thrilling spectacle. Like Syberberg, Pynchon dares us to consider the entire war as a movie set featuring a cast of millions and an almost unlimited budget. To see the war as a movie is to have "the Mystery Insight" (QR 691) which also crowns you the "Paranoid . . . For The Day (QR 691) because, as the narrative exclaims, "Yes, it is a movie! Another World War II situation comedy" (691-692). However, Pynchon presents Hitler--like all the world leaders--as a puppet director with no more power than one of Syberberg's broken marionettes. In this way, Pynchon finally exorcises Hitler from our social memory. Like Roosevelt, Hitler was a construction, a puppet assembled so as to keep the public distracted. The real power lies with the trans-national cartel: IG Farben, Shell, General Electric. We need to look beyond 'significant events' in order to discern new configurations of power at work in the war. Both Syberberg and Pynchon view the spectacular relation of a nation to its past as the legacy of the war and the fulfilment of fascism's own relation to film. This does not mean that we must deny the spectacle or its attraction. Rather, both Pynchon and Syberberg provide a cinematic spectacle in which the past is enacted within the present.

Finally, we should note that for Pynchon and Syberberg the fun park and tourist attraction have now become a locus

for social control. Syberberg argues that to view the past through a series of spectacular parks and sites is the very legacy of the Nuremberg masses. Tourist camps and public attractions present a past according to the dictates of the snapshot. Fascism, in part, is a theatre of the spectacle in which the public gets the version of their past that they desire. Standing before a projection of Hitler's retreat home--where Hitler, apparently on holiday, made many key political decisions--the "Director of Tourism" welcomes the viewer:

Good day, one and all! Don't worry. No politics here, we don't want any problems. The goal is spare-time industry, entertainment, show business, movies, and tourism. Naturally, within the pale of the law, not of morality. Business, you have to have fun, and the best fun is the one that sells well. Business is the democrat's freedom. And democracy is possible only with economic growth. Seen in such terms, Hitler is quite obviously the international top drawer, with genuine box-office appeal. Concessions are clear: feelings, the public, but the public is always right. At the cash register, quality decides, quite democratically: porno, hetero, homo, blood, horror, authentically human, in disaster solid history with expressive performers. Big business, huge, worldwide, socialistic, sociopolitical. Nothing esoteric, Culture is wiped out. Genuine popular taste prevails here. (Syberberg 228-229)

We return to the politics of the big show of history. This politics is also of the order of faciality, in that total war requires the face as a signifier of the national leader. In the character of Milo, Heller provides a face to the previously faceless forces of the cartel. Genuine popular taste demands a face, a simple story capable of being compressed on a bronze plaque, and an opportunity for

photographs. Pynchon rejects the common faciality of national leaders; hence Hitler deserves no mention, as he is a construct, a ruse, that we must learn to see beyond. Both Syberberg and Pynchon provide us with an education in paranoid critical thinking, where we learn to emplot divergent histories of our own past.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Many notable novelists of the Great War, such as Hemingway, served as war correspondents in World War II. For more information on war correspondents in World War II see Richard Collier, Fighting Words: The War Correspondents of World War II (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989). How are we to understand the acceptance of pro-war rhetoric and propaganda amongst these writers? The answer lies in the need to fight fascism; a cause which had been championed by many American writers since the Spanish Civil War. Indeed, the Spanish Civil War marks the turning point away from the individualist, romantic rejection of propaganda which was present in World War I, to a new sense of the writer as politically engaged in a war against Fascism.

<sup>2</sup>See Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, Trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 233-309. To become animal is not to imitate an animal, but rather to engage in a new form of becoming human. War proliferates animal becomings: "It is in war, famine, and epidemic that werewolves and vampires predominate" (Deleuze and Guattari 243). Deleuze and Guattari add that "Man does not become wolf . . . the vampire and werewolf are becomings of man . . . but do not look for a resemblance or analogy to the animal . . . It is within us that the animal bares its teeth . . ." (275).

<sup>3</sup>In "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" Laura Mulvey argues that mainstream Hollywood cinema codes the erotic pleasure of scopophilia (pleasure in looking) according to the dictates of "a dominant patriarchal order" (Mulvey 16). In such an order, "pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (18). Men derive pleasure as bearers of the look whereas women, as subjects both constituted in, and subjected to, patriarchal constructions are to be looked at: "Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle" (Mulvey

19). To occupy the position of the male is to be the bearer of the look; to be feminine is to be the passive image the observer enjoys.

<sup>4</sup>See Stephen L. Sniderman's "'It was All Yossarian's Fault': Power and Responsibility in Catch-22", in James Nagel (Ed), Critical Essays on Joseph Heller (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1984), 33-39. Sniderman argues that Yossarian is responsible for nearly all the major calamities which befall his comrades and that he must learn to take moral responsibility for what has happened. However, Sniderman does not consider Yossarian's relationships with women as part of this process.

<sup>5</sup>In David Seed's The Fiction of Joseph Heller: Against the Grain (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), Heller is quoted as saying of Catch-22: "I regard this essentially as a peacetime book. What distresses me very much is that the ethic dictated by a wartime emergency has a certain justification, but when this thing is carried over into areas of peace; where the same demands are made upon the individual in the cause of national interest . . . this wartime emergency ideology transplanted to peacetime, leads to not only absurd situations, but to tragic situations" (59).

<sup>6</sup>As H. Bruce Franklin notes in his War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988): "M & M's most implausible and outrageous acts, such as contracting with both sides to maximize war profits, are no more outlandish than GM's construction of weapons for both sides throughout the war" (124).

<sup>7</sup>Hereafter Gravity's Rainbow is abbreviated as GR. All ellipses presented in quotations appear in GR unless placed within square brackets.

<sup>8</sup>The phrase "paranoid history" is taken from Scott Sander's "Pynchon's Paranoid History," Twentieth Century Literature 21 (1975): 177-192.

<sup>9</sup>The play on 'real' and 'unreel' comes from Greta's song, addressed to her director Carl Denham: "I was thinking of/Denham--only him, with gun and camera/Wisecracking in his best bum actor's way/Through Darkest Earth, making the unreal reel/By shooting at it, one way or another--" (GR 689).

<sup>10</sup>See Paul Virilio and Sylveré Lotringer, Pure War, trans. Mark Polizzotti (Columbia: Semiotext(e), 1983).

<sup>11</sup>For a detailed account of the relationship between dreams of weapons and modern American culture see H. Bruce

Franklin, War Stars: The Superweapon and the American Imagination.

<sup>12</sup>See in particular N. Katherine Hayles, The Cosmic Web: Scientific and Literary Strategies (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1984).

<sup>13</sup>Charles Clerc presents a concise list of all the major films mentioned in GR. See Charles Clerc, "Film in GR," in Approaches to Gravity's Rainbow, ed. Charles Clerc (Columbus: Ohio UP, 1983) 103-152.

<sup>14</sup>For more on "creative paranoia" see Mark Richard Siegel, Creative Paranoia in Gravity's Rainbow (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1978).

#### CHAPTER 4 VIETNAM FICTION, TELEVISION, AND CULTURAL MEMORY

During the last five years, there has been an unprecedented interest in the Vietnam War. This is evident in the popular television series China Beach and films such as Full Metal Jacket (1987), Platoon (1986), and Casualties of War (1990). In part, this resurgence of interest in Vietnam reflects contemporary America's fascination with what is now known as the 1960s. More books than ever before are being written and published on Vietnam and the trend appears not yet to have reached its peak. Since the publication of The Great War and Modern Memory in 1975, Paul Fussell's argument that literature transforms the experience of war into a cultural shared memory or myth has established the parameters for much modern criticism of Vietnam War literature.

##### Vietnam and the Critics: Fiction as Sense-Making Activity

In American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam Philip Beidler suggests that the best Vietnam literature displays "a commitment on one hand to an unstinting concreteness--a feel for the way an experience actually seizes upon us" and "a distinct awareness of engagement in a

primary process of sense-making, of discovering the peculiar ways in which the experience of the war can now be made to signify within the larger evolution of the culture as a whole" (xiii). Yet as Beidler himself acknowledges, the experience of Vietnam has no inherent meaning, no sense or signification, outside of the process of sense-making. Rather than simply reporting the experience of Vietnam, writers must now create a Vietnam so as to allow their experience to have significance:

Mainly, Vietnam would always be a place with no real points of reference, then or now. As once in experiential fact, so now in memory as well. It would become the task of the Vietnam writer to create a landscape that never was, one might say--a landscape of consciousness where it might be possible to accommodate experience remembered within a new kind of imaginative cartography endowing it with large configurings of value and signification. (Beidler 16)

If, as Michael Herr writes of Vietnam in the opening paragraph of Dispatches, "even the most detailed maps didn't reveal much anymore," (Herr 11) then for Beidler the writer struggling to understand Vietnam must chart an imaginary map of the psychic terrain of his wartime experience.

But whose terrain does the writer chart in the quest to give significance to his or her own experience? The paradox involved in this cartography lies in the individual subject's charting of a "landscape of consciousness" that belongs not only to the writer but also to a mythic consciousness which he or she shares with a collective cultural community. The paradox occurs when we consider



that rather than the experience becoming intelligible to others through the process of sense-making, the cultural processes of sense-making--involving the translation of individual experience into the symbolic reservoir of collected myths and images--themselves find an outlet in the experience.

Although Mailer's Why Are We in Vietnam? never reaches the geographic Vietnam, the novel remains a powerful and incisive work of war fiction exposing all the violent mythic prefigurations within American patriarchal society that find a context for their expression in Vietnam. Narrated by D.J., an 18-year old Texan male, the novel tells of his hunting trip to Alaska with his father Rusty, the head of a powerful corporation. Unlike The Naked and the Dead, the very title presents a puzzle: only the last paragraph explicitly mentions the war, when D.J. quips that he and his friend Tex are "off to see the wizard in Vietnam" (WAWIV? 208). As a narrator D.J. functions as a disc jockey who plays tracks from William Burroughs, the conversational speech of his parents, Kierkegaard, and a polyphonic array of voices comprising an emerging youth culture reared on rock music, drugs, and a Liberal Arts education. Yet the story of D.J.'s rite of passage into the world of American manhood, with its reflections on nature, survival, and violence, has roots in the tradition of Thoreau, Emerson, and Jack London.

Indeed, the North American mythic consciousness provides, in Beidler's words, both a "Prophecy and Context" for the Vietnam War.<sup>1</sup> Beidler convincingly argues that:

If this war . . . truly belonged by way of strange mythic prefiguration to a whole line of classic American isolatos, messiahs, doomed eirons, and sainted ascetic killers, it also belonged equally, and in the same fashion, to a host of movie and TV gunfighters, brave and persevering dogfaces and GI Joes, comic-book champions of truth and right, secret agents and howling commandos and various other enforcers without portfolio. (22-3)

Although Beidler does not develop this line of thought, the above passage displays an astute understanding of what I identified in the previous chapter as the paracinematic. Like Pynchon's *Zone* and the movie theatre of Syberberg's *Hitler: A Film From Germany*, the Vietnam War will itself entail a playing out of an entire repertoire of modern American myths. Herr's *Dispatches* provides numerous examples of such a staging of myths in Vietnam, including a captain who invites Herr outside "to play Cowboys and Indians" with the Vietcong (63), and a squad "dressed up in Batman fetishes" for good luck (59).

In *Walking Point: American Narratives of Vietnam*, Thomas Myers argues that war literature involves a battle for popular memory. In the battle for the political and cultural significance of Vietnam, Myers claims that popular myth is conservative because it merely reflects images of nationalist pride and "rewards a mass readership with what it most deeply desires to feel or to believe" (6). The function of the war novel is to couple mythic images with a

critical consciousness sensitive to the political and ideological content of national myths:

The war novel in its most fully realized form as a historical and aesthetic enterprise is the imaginative inscription of both configurations: the clearly demarcated grouping of elements that are the lived history of the war; and the larger, more elusive components of national myth and belief that are tested, reaffirmed, cast off, or revised in the broadest cultural sense. (Myers 10)

Like Beidler, Myers follows Fussell as positing war literature as fundamentally a sense-making activity. The teleological notion of a "fully realized form" of the war novel functions as an aesthetic criterion for evaluating the quality of war fiction. Hence, Myers argues that "The best of American war fiction invariably deals specifically and deliberately with the linguistic strategies, both popular and official, that are the fuel for collective memory and offers itself as a fully realized metalanguage of warfare" (Myers 13).

But to what extent do Vietnam War novels offer the possibility of a shared, collective memory? While the majority of critics writing on Vietnam War fiction presume that novels and films present a process by which individual experience is transferred into a collective memory, Susan Jeffords argues that such a collective memory is a gendered fiction. In The Remasculinization of America Jeffords examines the prevalent masculine point of view inherent within contemporary representations of the Vietnam War and proposes that Vietnam narratives only "create the illusion

of a collective experience" (Jeffords 25). The process of remembering Vietnam must be considered in terms of the emergence of popular feminism during the 1970s. Once situated within such a context, the "I was there" nature of Vietnam narratives allows for the inscription of a collective male narrative at a time when traditional masculine roles and values were threatened by feminism. The questioning of distinctions between fact and fiction--present in such works as Herr's Dispatches and Mailer's The Armies of the Night--are for Jeffords nothing more than rhetorical ruses that disable the reader from securing a stable vantage point from which she or he could evaluate the text. Jeffords notes that in much male-produced discourse on the war pre-war oppositions such as friend/enemy, truth/fiction, victory/loss become muddled "so that it is impossible to determine which construct is which and only individual will/assertion/declaration/death can 'answer' the question of definition" (50).

Jeffords argues that the key to understanding Vietnam narratives lies in situating them in the context of a process of remasculinization within American society, a process she defines as "a regeneration of the concepts, constructions, and definitions of masculinity in American culture and a restabilization of the gender systems within and for which it is formulated" (51). Vietnam narratives are characterized by confusion, but this confusion only serves to blur the fact that "war is the spectacle of the

masculine bond" (Jeffords 73). The surge of interest in the Vietnam War--ranging from Rambo: First Blood (1985) and Platoon to the growing number of veterans' memoirs and the emergence of the genre of Vietnam War fiction--reveals not, as is often argued, an attempt to work through the trauma of Vietnam but rather a re-affirmation of masculinity and the formation of "a new consciousness for America, one in which Vietnam is no longer a marginalized experience but will instead pervade all cultural formations and interpretations" (Jeffords 80). For Jeffords, the rising ascendancy of the veteran, as a public figure who can speak the truth about war and whose experience has something valuable to offer society, is a crucial indication of the process of remasculinization within North America. In position as both hero and victim, the veteran is able to produce a discourse which effectively represses class and racial differences in its account of the truth of the shared experience of men at war. In The Remasculinization of America Jeffords dares to question those who claim to be able to speak the truth about the war. As I have previously mentioned, for Jeffords the common blurring of distinctions such as fact/fiction, enemy/friend, illusion/reality, within many Vietnam narratives only serves as a ploy which helps prevent the reader from challenging the text's re-inscription of the masculine point of view as that which yields the truth about Vietnam.

### Television and Vietnam Fiction

I have summarized the above critics in order to bring to light a certain problem concerning Vietnam fiction. On the one hand, critics such as Beidler and Myers view war novels as part of a process by which individual experience is transferred into social memory. All of these critics agree that the host of novels, films, and television shows contribute to a cultural memory of the war. Jeffords, however, argues that this pool of memories and associations re-inscribes a number of traditional gender roles questioned by feminism. Yet what is the relationship between cultural memories of the war and electronic media? The process by which Vietnam narratives enter popular memory cannot be divorced from a consideration of the role electronic media play in transmitting the spectacle of war. Beidler and Myers argue that the war novel bridges the gap between individual experience and collective memory by drawing upon a mythic consciousness. This mythic consciousness constitutes, in part, an electronic archive comprising a host of transmitted icons and narratives including television news broadcasts, John Wayne movies, the Batman television series, and Davy Crockett.

As I have shown in my reading of Mailer's Why Are We in Vietnam?, Vietnam clearly needed to be situated within the context of American myths of masculinity. However, we cannot consider the apparatus for the transmission of these myths outside of an appreciation of the power of television.

In Television and the Red Menace: The Video Road to Vietnam,

J. Fred MacDonald argues that in order to understand the relationship between television and Vietnam, we need to look beyond network news coverage and towards the content of many popular television shows. The Kennedy presidency, which fostered the notion of the American public as a nation of spectators, established a set of relations between audience and television that would come to fruition in the Vietnam War. MacDonald writes:

It is ironic that while it was silent, even ignorant, about the coming Vietnam War, television had prepared the nation for just such a battle. It was not a conscious brainwashing, but a subtle persuasion acted out over a dozen or more years of programming. TV told Americans the world was black and white, good and bad. TV showed that American virtues always triumphed, that American answers were best for mankind, and that Americans were selfless, wanting only to help others. Simplistic in its anti-Communism, increasingly venerative of national political leaders, and traditionally superficial and biased, TV indicated there was no need for profound analysis or skepticism. (168)

MacDonald isolates the figure of the American television hero--the very mythic archetype mentioned by Beidler--as the primary vehicle for the transmission of such clear-cut, black and white values:

This composite character might be an historic figure whose self-sacrifice was recalled in a documentary series or moralistic drama. He could be a fictional soldier, cowboy, or secret agent. His purpose was revealed in war dramas, situation comedies, spy stories, and Westerns. Whenever encountered, this champion proffered a role model for a nation at war: an unswerving representative of the best of things American--the product of democracy--the protector and/or savior of the downtrodden--not so committed as to be a zealot,

but sufficiently sketched in human terms as to be recognizable and emulable. (MacDonald 185)

Vietnam was the first television war not only because the war was covered by television journalists, but also for the simple reason that the values conveyed by television shows themselves constituted a rationale for increased American military involvement. What is suprising--almost unbelievable--about the Vietnam War is the lack of public debate on the decision to enter into a war: "The Vietnam War was eased into. Without open debate and without popular comprehension of the issues, motives, or consequences, Americans one day simply found themselves in an Asian land war" (MacDonald 169). This lack of debate is, in part, a symptom of the widespread acceptance of the American good-guy as popular hero. For the average television viewer how could American involvement be wrong?

For many young men who volunteered for active service in Vietnam, television and movies provided all the reasons necessary to wage the war. Ron Kovic in Born on the Fourth of July recalls that "The whole block grew up watching television. There was Howdy Doody and Rootie Kazootie, Cisco Kid and Gabby Hayes, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. The Lone Ranger was on Channel 7" (Kovic 49). Kovic remembers watching John Wayne in Sands of Iwo Jima (1949), and how the Marine Corp song at the end of the film brought him to tears. The film became the basis of a number of childhood games: "We'd go home and make up movies like the ones we'd



just seen or the ones that were on TV night after night" (Kovic 55). These games, in an almost uncanny foreshadowing of the use of napalm in Vietnam, sometimes ended with the burning of plastic soldiers: "They burned with high-propane lighter fluid and a quarter-gallon of gasoline or were thrown into the raging fires of autumn leaves blasting into a million pieces" (Kovic 55). Film and television, then, give rise to dreams of military victories and burning bodies.

In A Rumor of War, Philip Caputo recalls his decision to enlist in 1960:

The country was at peace then, but the early sixties were years of almost constant tension and crisis; if a conflict did break out, the Marines would be certain to fight in it and I could be there with them. Actually there. Not watching it on a movie or TV screen, not reading about it in a book, but there, living out a fantasy. Already I saw myself charging up some distant beachhead, like John Wayne in Sands of Iwo Jima, and then coming home a suntanned warrior with medals on my chest. The recruiters started giving me the usual sales pitch, but I hardly needed to be persuaded. I decided to enlist. (Caputo 6)

The desire for combat is, in part, the desire to be in a real film. For in emulating John Wayne, both Kovic and Caputo suggest that an identification with the soldier-as-hero involves a new sense of war as essentially cinematic. Both Kovic and Caputo testify to the cost of remembering World War II as a Hollywood war movie. Indeed, on a certain level Sands of Iwo Jima is as crucial to understanding the Vietnam War as the Gulf of Tonkin incident. The voluntary enlistment of thousands of young men like Ron Kovic was a

direct result of a certain type of cultural memory of World War II; a memory imbued with patriotic fervor and ideals of meaningful sacrifice. The appeal of war, for such young men, lies in its capacity to transform them from spectators to movie-star heroes. What they discovered in Vietnam, however, is that the reality of war as lived experience bore no resemblance to Hollywood's flights of fancy or television series like The Rat Patrol: this is one of the most bitter and painful lessons ever learnt by American men in the twentieth century.

For most Americans, Vietnam was initially perceived as a war movie. Stanley Kubrick's Full Metal Jacket (1987), written by Kubrick, Michael Herr and Gustav Hasford, suggests the extent to which Vietnam was perceived as a war film by soldiers in the field. The film follows Joker, a correspondent for the Marine Corp, from his basic training at Parris Island to active service in Vietnam. As a television crew interviews Joker's squad in Hue during the Tet offensive, Joker imitates John Wayne as his friend, who bears the archetypal name 'Cowboy,' quips "Hey, start the cameras. This is Vietnam--the Movie." As the film progresses, the Tet offensive literally becomes a theatre of war. In the scene immediately following the troops joking before the camera, in which the Marines haggle with a teenage Vietnamese prostitute and her pimp, the squad are seated outside the theatre on rows of broken movie seats. This implies that the entire war is entertainment; a reading

supported by the very last shot of the film in which the squad, marching towards the Perfume River, chant the anthem of the Mickey Mouse club. The reference to Mickey Mouse reminds us of Drill Sergeant Hartman's final question to Gomer, the obese recruit nicknamed after Gomer Pyle, who finally shoots Hartman before killing himself: "What is this Mickey Mouse shit?" This question forms the kernel of Kubrick's somewhat detached and clinical treatment of the spectacle of Vietnam. The war's origins lie in a desire for the show of American strength and identity, but this show of strength, rather than espousing the values of the John Wayne films Joker imitates, is nothing more than a bloody slasher movie--the last words spoken to Joker, after he shoots a Vietnamese woman sniper through the head at point blank range, are "Hard core, man. Fucking hard core."

### Television: Incoherence and Cultural Memory

Despite the social turbulence and demonstrations of the 1960s, for the audience at home Vietnam was primarily a media event. Both anti-war demonstrations and reports from Vietnam appeared on the nightly news. Furthermore, the process by which a veteran initially evaluated his war experience was already structured by a host of images received from television. When we consider the relationship between Vietnam War fiction, television, and cultural memory a major question arises which needs to be addressed: if the primary social function of Vietnam fiction is to transfer

the experience of war into a collective cultural memory, then how do we explain the surprising absence of Vietnam fiction in the 1970s? The majority of novels, films, and television series concerning Vietnam are products of the 1980s rather than the immediate post-war period. How are we to interpret this hiatus in the process of social memory?

This hiatus is all the more important when we remember the immediacy of television news broadcasts. The spectacle of Vietnam on television was a quotidian event in the lives of most Americans. However, the character of this spectacle changed somewhat during the course of the war. We must distinguish, in television coverage, between the spectacle of aerial warfare and that of ground coverage.<sup>2</sup> The television coverage of aerial bombardment inscribed a spatial distance between the viewer and the intended target. The position of the camera onboard military aircraft itself fostered the viewer's identification with the air crew. Moreover, in such broadcasts the audience witnessed the speed of the aircraft itself and thus tended to identify with the aerial attackers rather than the victims on the ground, as the speed of the aircraft derealized the ground under attack. Ground coverage, however, allowed the audience to identify with victims of an military attack as such coverage displayed the effects of military firepower on the body, and so tended to be more controversial than aerial footage. MacDonald notes that the most renowned instance of TV coverage upsetting to the Pentagon was Morley Shafer's

report on the "CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite" on August 5, 1965 (MacDonald 235). The report showed U.S. Marines burning huts in the village of Cam Ne with their Zippo lighters while Shafer observed that "Today's operation is the frustration of Vietnam in miniature" (Quoted in MacDonald 236). The most powerful television stories transgressed the aerial and ground coverage axis by demonstrating the effects of aerial bombardment on the ground. Hence, one of the most powerful images of the latter stages of the war was the figure of a naked child screaming in pain as she endured a napalm attack.<sup>3</sup> The audience's outrage that children should endure such pain was compounded by their realization of what other bombing raids meant for people on the ground.

The prevalent explanation for the delay in the production of works dealing with the war is that the war was too traumatic for the American population to immediately confront. Regardless of whether one supported or opposed the war, Vietnam could only be considered a disastrous defeat. In his article "Coming To Terms with Vietnam," Peter Marin argues that the post-war decade was characterized by feelings of national guilt. Marin writes:

what paralyzed us was not simply the guilt felt about Vietnam, but our inability to confront and comprehend that guilt: our refusal to face squarely what happened and why, and our unwillingness to determine, in the light of the past, our moral obligations for the future. In short, we spent a decade denying and evading guilt rather than using it to our advantage. (Quoted in Wilson 2)

The collective denial of the Vietnam War is a symptom of a national trauma that displays, as its primary symptom, an inability to transfer feelings of guilt and defeat into social memory.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is a perfect symbol of this blockage. The war is incapable of being represented in the national imaginary; what we witness instead is a scar cut deep into the body of the American capitol. For the visitor who enters the trench-like Memorial to face the names of the war dead, the experience of remembering and mourning the dead is intensely personal. There is no one object or statue which draws visitors together in the collective act of observing a monument. Yet this is the Memorial's power: what it remembers is the impossibility--and vulgarity--of assigning any one symbolic meaning to the deaths of those individuals whose names it records. In this sense, the collective pain of Vietnam resides in its apparent resistance to the process of collective symbolization and mourning. The paradox of the collective amnesia of Vietnam is that it may itself be a symptom of an insistent, though yet unsymbolized, trauma which the nation cannot forget.

While Marin's sense of the post-war decade as suffering from guilt trauma has its merits, we must also acknowledge another reason for the collective amnesia of the 1970s. Namely, once the immediacy of the spectacle of the war passed from the television screen, then the war itself

appeared incoherent. From the Gulf of Tonkin incident--that had all the staged features of a pseudo-event comparable to the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine in the Spanish-American war--to the evacuation of Saigon, the war existed in the public mind as a media event. Mailer's The Armies of the Night focusses on the war as media event and on the implications of the construction of the spectacle for the production of historical discourse. The march on the Pentagon is an event staged for the purpose of seizing the media's attention. Mailer thus poses the question of how to report an event staged purely for the purposes of being reported. More importantly, Mailer's ambivalent feelings towards the march are reflected in the absence of any one dominant narrative voice--an absence that comes to characterize the entire post-war period's attitude toward the war. Indeed, the Vietnam War, along with the civil rights movement, led to the realization that social memory is itself the site of a contest between competing narratives. The emergence of protest movements in the 1960s is, in part, the proliferation of the spectacle of dissent that challenges the notion that the war might have a singular, collective significance. The immediacy of news constitutes a crucial part of its significance for the viewer. For all of the protest and dissent, while it was still a topic of regular news stories, the Vietnam War had a significance and meaning as news. Once American forces

returned home, in the media's eyes the story of the war was literally over.

The war, then, is remembered not as a coherent narrative but rather as a host of unresolved domestic and foreign conflicts. A common charge levelled against Vietnam War novels, and works such as Michael Herr's Dispatches, is that they forget history because they fail to provide a coherent historical framework by which the war may finally be understood and remembered. James C. Wilson argues:

The Vietnam novels do not fare better than the personal narratives, when considered in their entirety. Totally lacking a historical dimension, most of the novels present the war in terms of how it affects their protagonists personally. When mentioned at all, history becomes a ghostly presence, an abandoned French armored vehicle or a ruined watchtower that serves as a reminder of possible failure. (Wilson 54)

Presumably, Wilson's notion of an "historical dimension" involves a cohesive, collective narrative of the involvement of colonial powers in the internal affairs of Vietnam. For Wilson, the recourse to personal narrative in Vietnam fiction fails to address the larger historical context of the war.

There is no doubt that most Vietnam novels and personal narratives concentrate on the effects of the war on individual characters. Compared to World War II novels there is little emphasis on war as a sinister activity staged for the benefit of a hidden cartel. There are no Yossarians or Slothrop; no paranoid historians attempting to unravel the mystery of their predicaments. However, the



abandonment of the construction of broad historical narratives does not mean that Vietnam novels are by definition ahistorical. Rather than chastising, as Wilson does, the overwhelming tendency of Vietnam novels to favor personal narratives, we need to interpret the abandonment of such a broader "historical dimension." For the inability to find a historical context for the veteran's narrative is itself of primary historical significance. As opposed to denying history, much Vietnam writing proposes the personal narrative as the most effective vehicle for the transmission of historical knowledge. Many Vietnam authors suggest that the war was too incoherent to be readily emplotted into a unified historical narrative. As opposed to the authoritative certainty of the impersonal historical narrative, the personal account provides the most effective form for reflecting upon an incoherent war.

The incoherent nature of the war is the subject of Michael Herr's Dispatches. For Herr, the primary characteristic of the Vietnam experience is information overload; all he can remember is a torrent of images, stories, facts, and personal associations. The war is too spectacular to be immediately coherent and refuses to make sense upon later reflection: "The problem was that you didn't always know what you were seeing until later, maybe years later, that a lot of it never made it in at all, it just stayed stored here in your eyes" (Herr 20). Herr describes Vietnam as a war movie; but one which is not

immediately, if ever, comprehensible to the viewer:

"Life-as-movie, war-as-(war) movie, war-as-life; a complete process if you got to complete it . . ." (Herr 67-68). As an observer of the war around him, Herr considers himself to be a moving camera who learns "that you were as responsible for everything you saw as you were for everything you did" (Herr 20). Yet the process of recalling and ordering the war, by which Herr transforms personal experience into a war narrative, differs from the techniques employed by a film editor. For while a film editor may edit raw footage so as to produce a final film, Herr maintains that certain experiences can never be excised from his memory:

Overload was such a real danger, not as obvious as shrapnel or blunt like a 2,000-foot drop, maybe it couldn't kill you or smash you, but it could bend your aerial for you and land you on your hip. Levels of information were levels of dread, once it's out it won't go back in, you can't just blink it away or run the film backward out of consciousness. How many of those levels did you really want to hump yourself through, which plateau would you reach before you shorted out and started sending the messages back unopened? (Herr 68)

Herr presents Vietnam as a stream of memories and associations that cannot be contained in the past, but are dispatched to the reader in the present time of the act of recollection. Herr's abandonment of a chronological arrangement of his own wartime experience, along with his favoring of subjective impressions, is not a denial of history but rather a symptom of information overload. Dispatches constantly returns to these images and signs of

overload which are in turn dispatched to the reader.

We see an abandonment of chronological time in Tim O'Brien's fine Vietnam novel Going After Cacciato. O'Brien presents Vietnam as a mixture of fantasy and fact, imagination and reality. The action centers around Paul Berlin's search for the enigmatic Cacciato, who has decided to literally walk away from the war--via the road to Mandalay--and to head for the pleasures of France. The narrative alternates between Berlin's fantasies and the reality of his wartime experience as he stands watch at his observation post. Like Pynchon's Zone in Gravity's Rainbow, O'Brien's Vietnam is an interface between the worlds of cinema, fantasy, and reality--we jump from episodes containing Flash Gordon-type Oriental villains to painful accounts of the deaths of Berlin's friends. The abandonment of chronological time further blurs distinctions between fantasy and reality, and foregrounds the extent to which the war fails to correspond to a set of expected narrative structures. Berlin initially considers himself a character in a war story, and accordingly anticipates a climactic resolution: "Waiting, trying to imagine a rightful but still happy ending, Paul Berlin found himself pretending, in a wishful sort of way, that before long the war would reach a climax beyond which everything else would seem bland and commonplace" (GAC 25). Towards the end of the novel, Berlin begins to confront the chaotic, incoherent character of a war that does not correspond to any narrative order:

The facts even when beaded on a chain still did not have real order. Events did not flow. The facts were separate and haphazard and random, even as they happened, episodic, broken, no smooth transitions, no sense of events unfolding from prior events. (GAC 207)

Paul Berlin, like Billy Pilgrim in Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five, finds that facts and events behave in a distinctly quantum manner. Events adhere to no a priori order, and this lack of order comprises the puzzle of Vietnam. Finally, the rejection of chronology corresponds to the failure of war-affirmative ideology--expressed in films such as Sands of Iwo Jima--to provide a narrative framework relevant to the experience of Vietnam.

The general movement away from chronological time also reflects the difficulty of trying to determine the origins of the Vietnam War. The American news media ignored the first Indochina War fought between Vietnam and France and presented the war in terms of the binary oppositions of the Cold War. The result was a willful forgetting of the history of Vietnam's struggle against its colonial rulers and the sudden emergence, in the American news media, of a war without origin. Herr's Dispatches raises the question of when the war actually began:

You couldn't find two people who agreed about when it began, how could you say when it began going off? Mission intellectuals like 1954 as the reference date; if you saw as far back as War II and the Japanese occupation you were practically a historical visionary. "Realists" said that it began for us in 1961, and the common run of Mission flack insisted on 1965, post-Tonkin Resolution, as though all the killing that had gone on before wasn't really war. Anyway, you couldn't use standard methods to date the doom;

might as well say that Vietnam was where the Trail of Tears was headed all along, the turnaround point where it would touch and come back to form a containing perimeter; might just as well lay it on the proto-Gringos who found the New England woods too raw and empty for their peace and filled them up with their own imported devils. (Herr 50-51)

The determination of significant dates is viewed by Herr as an arbitrary act that tells us little about the nature of the war itself. Indeed, the emergence of new journalism as a method of conveying news occurs within the context of the Vietnam War. Conventional journalism, like conventional history, presents dates as objective facts. John Hellmann notes that conventional journalism "refuses to acknowledge the creative nature of its 'news,' instead concealing the structuring mechanisms of its organizational mind behind masks of objectivity and facts" (4).

Yet to argue, as Herr does in Dispatches, that there can be no objective news or history does not constitute a denial of history as an interpretative activity. Rather, both the reader and writer engage in the task of attempting to make sense of the war. As with Mailer's The Armies of the Night, the employment of a self-reflexive style changes the reader's relationship to the spectacle of war.

Conventional journalism presents the viewer or reader with an already processed story which claims an objective status for its own representation of past events. The Vietnam War resulted in an unprecedented questioning of the authority and reliability of established news media, and the ensuing emergence of alternative journalistic practices and the

underground press. Indeed, once individuals assume a critical stance towards the objectivity of the press then, by necessity, they begin the interpretative task of emplotting their own account of the war. New journalist texts, such as Dispatches, present the incoherence of war in order to involve the reader in the process of interpreting the legacy and significance of Vietnam in a way a conventional chronological history could never achieve. In sum, the incoherence of the war, as expressed by many Vietnam War novels, is not a symptom of their refusal to engage in the search for a broader historical dimension. On the contrary, this incoherence should be placed in the context of highly processed media representations of the war that sought to eliminate all ambiguities. The formal experimentation of the work of Herr, Mailer, O'Brien, and Heinemann forces the reader to adopt a new position in regard to the spectacle of the war, in which the reader, along with the narrator or protagonist, engages in an active interpretation of the war's significance.

What methods are at the novelist's disposal to encourage the reader to engage in this active interpretive process? In mapping out the terrain of the war, the novelist relays to us a host of electronic images often--as in the case of Mailer and Herr--in a prose style possessing a speed reminiscent of the very condition of the transmitted signal. In Why Are We in Vietnam? and Dispatches, images and associations are relayed at an almost electronic speed

that pushes the reader towards overload. Indeed, both Why Are We in Vietnam? and Dispatches begin with a concern with speed. The second paragraph of Why Are We in Vietnam? begins

Well, now, friends and lovers, that means you out there in all that implosion land, dig into this--no such thing as a totally false perception. Have you ever contemplate [sic]? Listen, dig, Edison says--quote this from McLuhan--"I start with the intention to increase the speed of the Atlantic Cable, but when I've arrived part way in my straight line I meet with a phenomenon, and it leads me off in another direction and develops into a phonograph." And that's how Miles Davis was born. Bangalore, don't snore--here's the bulge: Edison was hip, baby, the way you make it is on the distractions. Leave a little of your shit behind each time, that's charity for all. There's probably no such thing as a totally false perception. (WAWIV? 8)

It's worthwhile to compare this paragraph with the often quoted second paragraph of Dispatches, in which Herr remembers contemplating an old French map of Vietnam:

If dead ground could come back and haunt you the way dead people do, they'd have been able to mark my map CURRENT and burn the ones they'd been using since '64, but count on it, nothing like that was going to happen. It was late '67 now, even the most detailed maps didn't reveal much anymore; reading them was like trying to read the faces of the Vietnamese, and that was like trying to read the wind. We knew that the uses of most information were flexible, different pieces of ground told different stories to different people. We also knew that for years now there had been no country here but the war. (Herr 1)

The method employed by both narrators involves a recognition of the value of associating connections rather than the linear construction of a narrative. This method arises from an acknowledgment of the relative character of perception

and information in "implosion land." D.J. tells us that in order to reach one's target, one needs to aim askew as the distractions and detours themselves serve as a valuable method for the invention of narratives. This is similar to Herr's statement that an old map--whose value resides in its capacity to represent a terrain in a useful manner--only has value as a point of departure for his own memory. More importantly, both paragraphs deal with "currents." D.J. realizes that Edison's desire for extra speed led to a number of critical detours, and by the end of Dispatches Herr implies that Vietnam was literally a current of implosive energy: "There was such a dense concentration of American energy there, American and essentially adolescent, if that energy could have been channeled into anything more than noise, waste and pain it would have lighted up Indochina for a thousand years" (45). Vietnam is viewed as a circuit through which a destructive current of American power passes. D.J. and Herr stand in the same electronic space, and as such are forced to deal with the barrage of information which engulfs them. In this way, the narrative style of D.J. and Herr corresponds to a certain degree to Raymond Williams's formulation of a viewer's experience of television as a flow of images organized by "not only the planned combination and fusion of words and images, but the process of movement and interaction through sequence and flow" (Williams 96).



Gregory Ulmer's Teletheory: Grammatology in the Age of Video provides a number of leads that help us think through the relationship between electronic speed, circuits, and the emplotment of memory in Vietnam fiction. As an inventive practice, teletheory begins with the recognition of "the possibility that cognition itself might be changing in a civilization switching to electronics" (Ulmer 2). In Vietnam fiction and memoirs, we witness symptoms of this movement towards electronic cognition. Ulmer's account of the manner by which television organizes information serves as a concise summary of the forms and styles of both Why Are We in Vietnam? and Dispatches:

Television organizes information narratively, ordering the complex interaction of sound and image through time by means of a combination of oral and pop culture forms, extending the simple forms of anecdote, joke, proverb, riddle, legend, and the like to new functions of classification and evaluation. (Ulmer ix)

These new functions of classification and evaluation form the basis of a new mode of writing the war novel and memoir. The relationship between Vietnam prose and electronic media entails more than the novel or memoir's challenging or reinscription of media representations of the war, as prose discourse itself employs methods and features of electronic cognition.

Such a mode of writing, as we can see in the opening paragraphs I have just quoted from Herr and Mailer, produces a narrative by what Ulmer names as "reasoning by conduction":

When we pose the ancient question of the ground of reason in the context of teletheory we think first of all of the pun that gives us an electronic ground. Ground: a conducting connection between an electric circuit or equipment and the earth or some other conducting body. Reasoning by conduction involves, then, the flow of energy through a circuit. (Ulmer 63)

In Dispatches, the "dead ground" returns to mark the map of Herr's own memoir "current." The information, as Herr tells us, is flexible; but this flexibility, as the condition of postmodern knowledge, exists in a particular relationship to personal memory. The flow of memory, in the age of television, performs the past as present. The difference here lies in the subject's relationship to a past time. Rather than remembering the war as a past which no longer exists in the present, both D.J. and Herr establish circuits in which past and present fuse together through the process of conduction.

My point here is that rather than ignoring or forgetting history, both Herr's and Mailer's work remember the war in a uniquely electronic fashion. Indeed, this is the only method that allows them to work through the very incoherence of the war. The movement towards personal narratives, rather than abandoning the possibility of a collective memory, places a fresh emphasis on conduction as a method of writing history--what Ulmer names as 'mystory.'<sup>4</sup> In The Things They Carried, Tim O'Brien writes:

You take your material where you find it, which is in your life, at the intersection of past and present. The memory-traffic feeds into a rotary up in your head, where it goes in circles for a while, then pretty soon imagination flows in and

the traffic merges and shoots off down a thousand different streets. As a writer, all you can do is pick a street and go for the ride, putting things down as they come at you. That's the real obsession. All those stories. (TTC 38)

As a writer attempting to come to terms with the pain of Vietnam, O'Brien decides in The Things They Carried to transform experience into memory by relying on the detour as a narrative method. The detour, as a narrative method, acknowledges the role subjective associations play in the act of recalling the past. To the extent that film and television documentaries on Vietnam already construct and select for the viewer the relevant footage of events, they are unable to convey to the reader the act of recalling the war central to much Vietnam literature. More importantly, the authoritarian character of these documentaries--with their confident account of the events and progress of the war--fails to convey to the viewer the degree to which television news coverage was itself the source of a good deal of contention and disagreement during the war. As such, these documentaries reinscribe the very power dynamics of the viewer's relationship to television news throughout the Vietnam War. The emphasis on conduction and memory in Vietnam fiction brings to light the primary danger of these documentaries: what will be remembered, in the long run, are not the details of the war itself but television's claim to authoritatively present the war to the viewing audience.<sup>5</sup>

The work of Caputo, O'Brien, and Herr indicates that the relation of the media to Vietnam extends beyond

questions of how the war was reported to the domain of the general dissemination of images of war throughout America society. The Vietnam War was the first television war not only because of daily television news reportage, but also because the generation who fought in Vietnam was reared on television. The first person narrative announces itself as a subjective body of knowledge; it make no objective claim to represent the world. Moreover, the type of knowledge inscribed in the personal narrative tells us a great deal about the extent to which television conveys a set of values about war. In Kovic's Born on the Fourth of July, we see how representations of war in popular culture form part of a cultural context for America's war in Vietnam. When Mailer addresses the question of why America is in Vietnam, he gathers together diverse elements of American popular culture, and proceeds by conduction rather than argumentation. The value of the first-person narrative is not merely its capacity to tell us what happened during the war, but also its ability to convey to us how images and stories of war constitute part of a shared cultural reservoir from which the author draws in order to tell his or her story.

### In Country: Television and the Memory of the Spectacle

I began, in Chapter 1, with a brief account of an exercise I set my students in a class I taught entitled "Writing about War." The exercise was a mystory in which

students were asked to write down their first memories of war. When had they first heard about war? How had that understanding changed over time? Rather than having to produce a chronological narrative, I asked the students to proceed by association and conduction. They were asked to isolate their first memory of war and then to note the order of memories as they were recalled, rather than arranging their memories in a chronological order.

These papers suggest that children form their sense of war from television, film, family, school, and their peers. The two most important transmitters of cultural memory appear to be television and games. Many students told me about a card game--similar, I believe, to the English game Snap--called "War." I was surprised that the relatively few students whose parents had served in Vietnam had heard little about the war from their parents. Nearly all the students believed that the American experience of Vietnam was entirely male--further evidence that despite the television show China Beach American women's experience of Vietnam has failed to enter a shared social memory. From reading these papers and listening to students reminisce about what they watched on television, I found myself not only wondering why students enjoy recalling old programs, but also speculating on the entire process by which television and film images of war enter into popular memory. Herr's Dispatches and my students' assignments suggest that electronic media form a continuum between war and peace

zones. Television offers an instant view of a distant space, and establishes an instant link between viewer and subject. Furthermore, my students' papers tended to confirm Raymond Williams's notion of the viewer's experience of television as a total flow, as the juxtaposition of images is more important in transmitting information on a particular subject than any one particular representation. Obviously, television news is only a minor factor in how children come to form their notions of war and peace; for the current generation of incoming college students Daffy Duck, M\*A\*S\*H, and Star Wars were equally influential. Through television, images of war--both past and present, real and imaginary--become part of our everyday lives.

The act of recalling where our notions of war come from has a distinctly political dimension. Rather than actively challenging or debating the values of my students--conservative, liberal and indifferent--I found myself fascinated by the archaeology of their own notions of war. The pedagogical value of such an exercise is that students realize that war is not an experience totally divorced from their own lives. On the contrary, they have already learnt--without knowing how or why--a great deal about war. The next step was to engage the class in the active evaluation of these impressions and memories by comparing them to images and ideas of war present in a number of other texts.

The most sustained exploration in fiction of the relationship between electronic media and the cultural

memory of the Vietnam War is Bobbie Ann Mason's novel In Country. Set in a small Kentucky town in the summer of 1984, the novel tells of Sam Hughes, a seventeen-year old high school graduate and her struggle to come to terms with her father's death in Vietnam. Although Sam lives with her uncle Emmett, who is a Vietnam veteran suffering from the effects of Agent Orange, she initially knows little about the war. Because her father died before she was born, he remains a mysterious and somewhat idealized figure. More real to Sam than her father's death in Vietnam, are the lives of M\*A\*S\*H characters whom she faithfully watches with Emmett every evening:

Years ago, when Colonel Blake was killed, Sam was so shocked she went around stunned for days. She was only a child then, and his death on the program was more real to her than the death of her own father. Even on the repeats, it was unsettling. Each time she saw that episode, it grew clearer that her father had been killed in a war. (Mason 25)

Mason describes how Sam's knowledge of Vietnam develops in relation to her experiences as a viewer. When Sam views the same episode of M\*A\*S\*H a second time, she has a different set of reactions from her first viewing. Mason presents Sam as an active viewer who has a complex set of reactions to the images of war she watches. While she enjoys watching M\*A\*S\*H with Emmett, she realizes that life and war are far more complex than any sitcom: "But she knew very well that on TV, people always had the words to express their feelings, while in real life hardly anyone ever did. On TV,

they had script writers" (Mason 45). Sam applies television as a criterion to evaluate her own experience--Emmett is compared to numerous characters on M\*A\*S\*H and even to James Stewart in Harvey (1950).

Sam's knowledge of Vietnam comes from diverse sources. However, television constitutes the primary medium for the transmission of cultural knowledge about the war, as for Sam images broadcast on television have a more immediate reality than the content of Emmett's war stories. As a child, Sam listened to Emmett's Vietnam tales but formed no real impression of Vietnam as a place: "Sam had a picture of Vietnam in her mind from Emmett's stories--a pleasant countryside, something like Florida, with beaches and palm trees and watery fields of rice and green mountains" (51). While Sam knows the technical names of numerous aircraft--"Hueys, Chinooks, Skytrains, Birddogs" (51)--and even watches Emmett act out his stories with plastic aircraft, the war has no inherent reality until Sam watches color television:

Irene stopped the stories. It upset her to be reminded of the war, but the reality of it didn't register on Sam until one day soon after they got their first color TV set. She was eight or nine. On the evening news, a report from Vietnam--it was during the fall of Saigon, in 1975, she thought--showed some people walking along a road with bundles on their backs. Some were carrying babies in their arms. Army jeeps chugged along the road. The landscape was believable--a hill in the distance, a paved road with narrow dirt shoulders, a field with something green planted in rows. The road resembled the old Hopewell road that twisted through the bottomland toward Paducah. For the first time, Vietnam was an actual place. (51)



Like Mary O'Hara in Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse-Five, Sam's mother Irene discourages the telling of war stories--she wants to forget the war. Television, though, presents information on Vietnam despite Irene's prohibition. Sam sees Saigon as a real place, as solid and as concrete as her own town. Hence Sam's first color television memory of the war establishes the close connection between Hopewell and Vietnam suggested by the title In Country. As a child, Sam views distant Saigon as a place as real as her own town. Television, then, collapses spatial distance and allows for a viewer's identification with other people. Sam's memory also concentrates solely on the images presented to her--no words or commentary are remembered.

Sam's memories are crucial to In Country, because Mason concentrates on how Vietnam touches a whole generation born after the war. In Country ends with Sam, her grandmother Mawmaw, and Emmett arriving at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington. Sam is surprised to discover her own name among the long lists of the war dead: "She touches her own name. How odd it feels, as though all the names in America have been used to decorate this wall" (245). What does Sam's inquiry tell us about the spectacle of war in the age of video? By presenting the detailed story of Sam's quest to make sense of Vietnam, Mason suggests that an appreciation of the past involves active interpretation rather than the passive consumption of the television

spectacle. As an amateur historian, Sam becomes interested in Vietnam when she realizes that the war is a crucial component of her own family history. Sam's active inquiry into the past takes on a personal significance when she views this historical knowledge as vital to an understanding of her own identity. When Sam discovers her own name she is able to touch a concrete metaphor of her own roots in a war fought before she was born.

In Country demonstrates how an appreciation of personal mystery as history brings about a fundamental change to a viewer's relationship to the spectacle. With the advent of cable television, many households have access to more documentaries, dramas, and war films than ever before. According to the TV Guide for the fall premier week of September 21-27, 1991, the Arts and Entertainment Channel and the Discovery Channel broadcast a combined total of sixteen war documentaries, the majority of which were devoted to World War II. Stations continue to broadcast M\*A\*S\*H every night. Mason suggests that the viewer's relation to television is as important as the content of the broadcast. The spectacle of war as presented on television is open to numerous readings depending on the interpretative activity of the viewer. A crucial component of the experience of cable viewing is flicking through numerous channels--an activity I have heard people call 'grazing' or 'power viewing.' Mason provides a detailed passage on Sam's power viewing:

She switched on MTV. Cyndi Lauper and her fat face. On Channel 7, The Dogs of War was ending. It occurred to Sam that being a mercenary soldier in Africa would be more exciting than anything she could think of doing around Hopewell. She switched back to MTV, hoping the Springsteen video would come on. Tom's smile was like Bruce's. Tom was the only exciting thing in Hopewell. The only reason to stay there was so she could work at the Burger Boy and wait on Tom if he came in. The sadness of his affliction hit her then like a truck. She thought of all the lives wasted by the war. She wanted to cry, but then she wanted to yell and scream and kick. She could imagine fighting, but only against war. All the boys getting killed, on both sides. And boys getting mutilated. (140)

Sam's thoughts turn away from Tom--a veteran made impotent during the war--and return to the television: "She punched through thirty-one channels--a rerun of Mayberry R.F.D., baseball, CNN news, preaching. She turned back to MTV and watched a video by Queen" (141).

Television viewing is frequently characterized as an essentially passive activity. Sam's viewing, however, is clearly active even though it does not contain any elements of interpretive work. She interacts with the television as she experiences the flow of associations stimulated by the images she sees. This interaction involves a constant process of identification with television images. Mason's skill as a writer lies in her careful attention to the details of Sam's viewing habits, which suggest that the process of watching television may be far more complex and mysterious than is generally believed. Sam arrives at her first intense feelings of disgust for war through a complex set of interrelations: watching a few minutes of The Dogs of

War, she imagines being a mercenary, only to think more seriously about war as she waits for the Born in the U.S.A. video, that in turn reminds her of Tom's pain and suffering. The detour here functions as a mode of electronic cognition which nevertheless arrives at a sound ethical conclusion: war is a waste of human life.

Television, as an electronic archive, does not come to dominate or supercede other forms of cultural memory. Sam reads numerous books on the Vietnam War and talks to veterans in her quest to understand the war. As she attempts to find out more about her father, she realizes that the dead are easy to idealize--as her grandparents idealize her dead father; that the "dead took their secrets with them" (Mason 182). When she finally reads her father's diary, she decides that he was just an ordinary man from Hopewell--just like the vets she meets at the local McDonalds--who possess no particularly noble or special characteristics. Sam's father initially represents the idealized dead who are viewed as sacrificing their lives for their country--the very core of the John Wayne Sands of Iwo Jima myth. The rejection of the ideal father is here symbolic of a rejection of an idealized national past in favor of a less glamorous account of recent history. Sam's sense of Vietnam is a product of an active process of interpretation and investigation which combines oral inquiry, reading, and research with television viewing.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>Chapter Two of Beidler's American Literature and the Experience of Vietnam is entitled "American Literature: Prophecy and Context."

<sup>2</sup>This difference between the spectacle of aerial bombing and ground warfare is suggested to me by Joyce Nelson's The Perfect Machine: TV in the Nuclear Age (Toronto: Between the Lines: 1987). Commenting on the first photographs released of the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Nelson writes: "These first photographs of the mushroom cloud--taken from an airborne perspective that itself implies transcendence through technology (for, after all, the human body cannot fly)--suggest, as images, the complete irrelevance of human beings in the subsequent unfolding of the new world. Excluding the city (sign of human presence) and celebrating an airborne perspective that defies corporeality, these photographs inscribe the only 'eye' which can safely look at this cataclysmic spectacle: the camera eye" (Nelson 32).

<sup>3</sup>Huynh Cong ("Nick") Ut's photograph "Accidental Napalm Attack" appeared in the New York Times, June 9, 1972., with the following copy: "South Vietnamese children and soldiers fleeing Trangbang on Route 1 after a South Vietnamese Skyraider dropped bomb. The girl at center has torn off burning clothes."

<sup>4</sup>In Teletheory: Grammatology in the Age of Video, (New York: Routledge, 1989) Gregory Ulmer proposes that "The emergence of a regionalized epistemology, the dysfunctioning of the grand explicating narratives, and the effectiveness of feminist appeals to personal experience are among the trends encouraging the development of mystory--a term designating the nexus of history, politics, language, thought, and technology in the last decade of this millennium" (Ulmer 82).

<sup>5</sup>The two documentaries I have in mind here are the PBS Series Vietnam: A Television History, Part 1 of which was first broadcast on October 4, 1983 and The Ten Thousand Day War: Vietnam 1945-1975.

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

During the writing of this dissertation, the United States engaged in two major military operations: the invasion of Panama, titled 'Operation Just Cause,' launched in December 1989, and the Gulf War waged against Iraq in the early months of 1991. What conclusions can be drawn from these events regarding the spectacle of war and popular memory? What roles will novels play in remembering these events?

The Panamanian invasion seems to have passed away from popular memory. As I write this Manuel Noriega is on trial in Miami; but there is little interest expressed by either the media or the public in the trial or its outcome. Although pro-war rhetoric still emplots war as an allegorical struggle between moral absolutes--as evident in both Iraqi and United States Gulf War propaganda--the fact remains that many adversaries who engage in modern war have once been business partners, if not friends. The labyrinthine plots of Gravity's Rainbow appear especially suited to the condition of much of today's news, in which we confront the tangled webs of the Iran-Contra and BCCI scandals. In terms of war, the forgetting of the past is due in part to the relationship between the spectacle of

instant live coverage and the complexity of modern international relations. News is increasingly what happens now as opposed to what new set of relations or intrigues have come to light. More precisely, while past events such as the Iran-Contra scandal are still newsworthy, they are not as spectacular as a live event. Hence, wars and invasions occur in the compressed present of television time--a present which has little time for the unravelling of complex plots. For example, the BCCI scandal was readily acknowledged by many American media commentators as just too complex to be a good story.

The Gulf War was the first cable television war. Rather than merely reporting events, the news carried by the Cable News Network itself constituted the events of the war. Cable news became as significant as events in the field, as the war itself was waged in the media terrain of cable news. Both George Bush and Saddam Hussein shared the same news network and for the first time video cassette messages by both leaders were exchanged and broadcasted to civilian populations in Iraq and the United States. Hence, to discuss television coverage of the war merely in terms of what news was censored or permitted is to risk ignoring the extent to which CNN coverage accelerated the desire for the spectacle. Never before has the public demanded to see so much, only to be allowed to see very little, for twenty-four hours a day. Live broadcasts were delivered from everywhere but the actual field of battle. One can only imagine what

the American public's response to Vietnam would have been like if news coverage had been managed by a news pool system, with all broadcasts limited to the area of the hotel lobby of the Saigon Hilton Hotel.

The Gulf War also brought about the production of the instant war souvenir: books, magazines, posters, badges, hats, and even shopping bags were produced not only as morale boosters but also as collectible items. In stark contrast to the end of the Vietnam War, many communities decided to construct small war memorials dedicated to those who served in the Gulf. The media presented the large homecoming parades, held at the end of the war, as an attempt to compensate the military for the absence of such parades after the end of Vietnam. The management of popular memory occurred within the context of the severest press censorship ever imposed by the U.S. military. In sum, the Bush administration hoped the war would be remembered as a restoration of national pride before the public was allowed to know the details of the war itself.

The Gulf War has already entered the electronic archive as the first literature of the war is the video documentary. Most video rental chain stores stock War in the Gulf, an uncritical collection of Pentagon-released material. The emphasis on the take-off and landing of jet aircraft offered by this series of videos resembles certain scenes from the popular film Top Gun (1985). Whereas for the young Ron Kovic, John Wayne was the quintessential American war hero,



American weaponry now appears to be the star of the show. Indeed, it makes perfect sense that Arnold Schwarzenegger became famous playing a morally lethal robot--we have come from patriotic ideals of Sands of Iwo Jima to the mechanical precision of The Terminator (1984). The Pentagon's release of video footage--shot in grainy black and white--of the destruction of key Baghdad targets further distances the spectacle of aerial bombardment from its effects on civilian populations. More than ever before, war appears to be waged by machines in the virtual reality of the video screen.

What role will the war novel have in remembering these conflicts? Clearly, the war novel will be able to adopt a more critical relation to the spectacle of war than that presented by video documentaries. Can we speculate as to what form these novels might take? The writer could choose any number of strategies. The Gulf War novel might foreground the complex intrigue surrounding U.S. relations with Iran and Iraq since the fall of the Shah of Iran in the late 1970s; in which case we will perhaps see a return to the consideration of war as a ruse waged in the interests of a hidden cartel. There will undoubtedly be a number of personal accounts of wartime service in the Gulf--especially in light of the lack of detailed information presented on the living conditions of troops stationed in Saudi Arabia during the war. The best of these novels will investigate the spectacle of war and will allow us to arrive at a new understanding of the Gulf War.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH


Harvey Molloy was born in Lancashire, England on September 21, 1961. In 1975 he emigrated with his family to New Zealand. He graduated from Victoria University of Wellington with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English in 1982, and from Massey University with a Master of Arts degree in English in 1985.

In 1987 he moved to the United States and began doctoral studies at the University of Florida. During his graduate course of study he worked as a teaching assistant in the English Department.

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R. Brandon Kershner, Chairman  
Professor of English

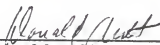
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Andrew Gordon  
Associate Professor of English


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Gregory Ulmer  
Professor of English

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Professor of English

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert D'amico  
Associate Professor of  
Philosophy

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 1992

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Dean, Graduate School